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The church in modern society

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THE CHURCH IN MODERN SOCIETY



BY

JULIUS H. WARD



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To
HENRY CODMAN POTTER
Bishop of New York

IN WHOSE EPISCOPATE
THE CHURCH IS ENTERING INTO ITS PROPER RELATIONS
WITH MODERN SOCIETY
THIS VOLUME
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED





PREFACE.

THIS book is intended for the whole Christian family in this country. The comparative study of the truths contained but imperfectly expressed in the terms of different creeds reveals larger agreements than men have willingly allowed; and when Christianity is interpreted helpfully and constructively in the light of these agreements, the Church of Christ exerts the organic influence in the social life which the national government exerts in the political and economic life of the people. The collective church has this large and comprehensive work to do, and the aim of these pages is to suggest a way in which it may be done.

BROOKLINE, Mass., *October 2, 1889.*



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THE CHURCH IN MODERN SOCIETY.

CHAPTER I.

Permanent Institutions.

THE order of the social world begins with the family. At first, the community was the family magnified by its growing relationships. The church was the family enlarged in a spiritual direction. The earliest human society grew out of the fundamental principles and the historical development of these institutions. They represent, under varying forms, the earliest organization of life, and are capable of that modification in growth by which the seed is traced in its expansion and fruit. They are the beginnings of primitive society, the constituent and permanent ele-

ments of all society. Under every modification which history records, these three institutions have retained their identity and exerted their legitimate and intended influence. They are divine in their origin and purpose, in the sense that all life is said to be divine. They are found in the earliest gathering of men together, and are structural in the social and spiritual economy of the race. The personal man, after Adam, has his root in the family; the political condition grows out of the necessity for order when men are living in community; the spiritual life of men, however personal in its inward intention toward God, finds expression in an institutional order which is included in the word Church. In the earliest Hebrew times the family, the community, and the church had their essential potency and meaning in a single household. The functions of each institution existed in distinct germs, but were often exercised by one and the same person; and when they were separated, it was

not felt that their relative bearing had been changed. Humanity was a unit under a threefold manifestation, and this was not more apparent in the Hebrew development, of which the record has been definitely preserved, than in the Gentile developments which existed side by side with that of the Hebrews. It is one of the structural features of human history, that, under all governments and among all races, the family, the body politic, and the ecclesiastical order have found their places. With great changes and modifications they have constantly retained their prevailing types, whether the light of God's presence in the world has been clearly recognized, as among the Hebrews, or partially hidden under superstitions and corruptions, as among the rival race-growths of the East. It deepens the sense of continuous order and of the constant unfolding of the life toward freedom to find that these institutions, which are fundamental in human society, do not change in their essential

character as the centuries go by. They are modified by the movements in the affairs of men, but they are the same in structure that they have ever been. It is the tendency of the time to see only the individual existence, to regard life in piecemeal, to secure the wellbeing of one man. Democratic society is a mass of units, and the struggle is toward the points where one man shall prevail; but the moment a general average is reached in the personal or political or ecclesiastical life, it is found that the ancient institutions of the world reappear and claim their own. They reappear, not singly, but together. If the church is disregarded, the state loses its tone and the family its complementary support. If the state is enfeebled, the church struggles as with an unnatural burden, and the personal education of the family through the state is interfered with. If the family life is neglected, the state is not reënfined with good citizens, and the church is comparatively powerless. The great changes

in history are connected with the rise and fall of these institutions. They are so closely related that society is touched as a whole whenever either of them is interfered with. This is freely acknowledged, but in the practical operation of institutions upon individual life it is often disregarded. The family is allowed to do its work without this assistance of the church; the church and the state are neutral or hostile; each pursues its own way as if it had nothing to do with the other. As there is in every well-ordered life an unrealized ideal to which the imagination appeals for the enthusiasm and the courage that carry one through the rough passages of experience, so there is a theory of the relation of divine institutions to one another which is necessary to the harmonious and simultaneous development of all the interests of human society; and it is in and through their essential unity and interdependence that social and spiritual advancement are to be reached.

The solidarity of human forces is a belief that is taught by a study of the processes of history. This is not always brought out by the historian. The progress of the state has usually been the theme of the historical writer, while its educational, social, and ethical life have been treated as if they did not exist. Buckle was among the first in our own day to enlarge the historical view, and the sociological studies of later date have brought within the range of historical writers the sum of the influences that have controlled the life of the people for a given period. History can no longer be the tracing of a single dominant idea in its process of development. It must be the tracing of the combined working ideas of the world as they have influenced society, and these working ideas are found in the central institutions that have prevailed from the beginning. They have not always had equally free play; but what has been realized in the social development of other ages has come, not through the

family education and the personal life of the individual alone, not through the control of the state in the form of personal despotism alone, not as a result of the ethical development through which the higher beliefs of men have modified human action, but through their combined yet often unequal action upon mankind. The movement of the world has been slow, infinitely slow, but it has been a solid movement toward human freedom. This freedom is not the predominance of any one idea or element; it has been the fruit of their combined energy in lifting man up to a higher ideal of society. Exclusively regarded on the ecclesiastical side, it has been the realization of the kingdom of God in the world; regarded in the light of common human experience, it has made mankind sharers in the redemptive agencies of a power that works for righteousness in society at large and is called the Church of Christ. The freedom that exists in the world to-day is not physical, social, ethical,

or spiritual so much as it is the enthronement of life upon a higher plane. It is the realization of the meaning of the City of God among the citizens of the world. It is the enlargement of life through the family, the state, and the church, in their combined influence upon the individual man, and in the direction which they give to society. There has been a growth in modern life which has been described as the development of individual liberty. The family, working freely, has been the home of the citizen, of the state, and of the earthly City of God, but the combined operation of church and state was for many centuries to suppress the individual in order to magnify the two institutions which have been employed to build up his life in freedom. The growth of modern society has been in the direction of the emancipation of the individual at the expense of both the state and the church. The problem to-day is to restore the family, the state, and the church to their

natural functions as central institutions for the organization, protection, and guidance of human life. The freedom of the individual has been secured through a process of evolution in which humanity has passed from childhood to maturity. The voice of the whole people is to-day that voice of God which was once thought to be heard in the commands of the king. The state in America and England has the precedence of the family and the church in the direction of society, and the work before the people is to place the church and the family on an equal footing with the state. The gradual transfer of authority from the head of the tribe to the people of the tribe,—the transfer of the rule from Abraham to the children of Israel,—is the description of the process that has culminated in the democratic commonwealth; but this large and free political and social existence is endangered in two directions. It is accompanied by the diminished influence of the family and

by the frequent ignoring of the ethical and spiritual influence of the kingdom of God. They exist ; but their organic character, the part they play as institutions in the moulding and elevation of individual life, is weakened by a mistaken conception of the basis upon which social and political freedom rest. The family and the church need to be restored to the place which the state, to a certain extent, holds in public opinion. They are the natural supporters of the state. The strength of our political life is in the industrial, social, and spiritual education of the people. The public school stands midway between the family and the church, and educates the people the best when both of these institutions inspire its work.

The problem at any period in the history of the world has been only different in form from that which is before the American people. The problem to-day is the relation of the three fundamental institutions, which have always expressed the

fullness of human and divine agency among men, to the necessities of modern society. Columbus discovered what he called the new world, and modern society almost had its beginning with that event. People who are here to-day find themselves in a world which is as new to its past as the world which Columbus first saw was new to his fellow-Europeans to whom he carried the fact of his discovery. There is a new feeling about the things which have been accepted. The scientific method takes nothing for granted, and the historical method slowly satisfies those who feel that the foundations of social and spiritual life are to be laid anew. The enlargement of existence, and the presence of forces which are changing the key-note from hour to hour, have given the impression that the institutional life of men is to be begun anew ; and in this conviction it is felt that the family and the church are not the important factors that they have shown themselves to be in history. It is from

this point of view that it is wise to study our social development. What are the conservative and constructive agencies which are to control and guide the miscellaneous life of the hour? How is the old to be adjusted to the new? How shall the family preserve its integrity? How shall the state maintain its freedom? How shall the church be the family of God among the people? Civil society is the field in which these ancient and permanent institutions are to find their adjustment to the working life of the people, and the Church of Christ has the duty of entering this field and making fresh conquests for God and humanity.





CHAPTER II.

The Church before the Reformation.

THE Church of Christ is singled out in history as the institution which in its various forms has contributed most to the direction of the world. It has ruled in human affairs for two reasons: it has claimed that the future life is determined by one's present conduct, and it has stood for the righteousness that is necessary alike in the family and in the state, if society is to discharge its highest ethical functions. It has had a supernatural sanction, and it has proved itself the best practical scheme for the regulation of conduct. This twofold appeal to men always existed and must be as operative in the future as in the past. It is, in effect, a twofold sanction. Much has been naturally made of the divine authority of Christianity, and

of the church as the organized form of society through which its principles have been transmitted and its benefits secured, —too much has perhaps been made to keep the harmony that should subsist between its three permanent factors. It is an ideal state of society where the divine sanction is the supreme reality, and where religious motives universally prevail. The actual state of things in the world is the ordering of life as conditioned by the two motives of future happiness and present convenience. The church, or what has stood in the place of the church, has had in earlier ages the sanction of divine authority more compactly asserted and maintained than it is insisted on now. The Jewish Church was essentially a theocracy in which every son of Israel had his immediate relation to God. Every heathen substitute for the church has aimed to give a divine sanction to the operations of life. The pure theism of the early religions was immensely expanded in its human relation-

ships by the advent of Christ, who revealed the brightness of God's glory and was the express image of his person. It was the Christ who gave all the old religions a new meaning, as if the dim visions had suddenly burst out into open day. It was the effect of the Incarnation that the divine authority of Christianity was most emphasized at its beginning, but it was greatly assisted in its identifications with human life by the embodiment of Christian principles in practical conduct. The church took the shape in the world which Christ is believed to have intended ; and the tracing of the form which it assumed through successive generations, in the processes of history, is the record of its contact with civilization, and of the way in which the one has acted and reacted upon the other.

The history of the church has usually been written as if it were the only divine institution in the world. It has been regarded as the only leaven of society. The family and the state have been regarded as

institutions which perpetuate corruption, while the church alone keeps society pure and maintains the integrity of the social and the political order. The mistake that has been made is in their separation, in urging the claims of the family and the state as infinitely lower than that of the church. It was natural to make this mistake, because the church is concerned with two worlds, the one that is and the one that is in process of being. It grew out of the undue insistence upon the authoritative sanction of the church as a divine institution and of the conviction that a man's spiritual interests exceed in importance his interests as a member of society. The larger principle is expanded in the saying, "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." But there has ever been, and there is to-day, the purely ecclesiastical way of looking at the church, — exalting its organization, its authority, its succession of ministers, its traditional faith, the validity of its sacraments, as if its virtue

was in these apart from their relation to men in the form of spiritual ministrations.

In one quarter the ecclesiastical authority has been exalted into a fetich ; in another, dogmas have taken on doctrinaire forms until the things insisted on as necessary to salvation often acquire the character of theological fictions. It is a long way to clearness of view when the supernatural neither in ministrations nor in belief takes a place that is out of harmony with the other factors of human development. The supernatural is not to be denied in the revelation of the truth to the human consciousness, nor in the Personality of our Lord ; but the supernatural element in the earlier history of our religion has been diminished in its power to move life to-day, and the purpose of improving humanity has come more and more into view. It is comparatively easy to assume much about the spiritual, or divine, authority of the church, and to regard any other sanctions of a working Christianity as unworthy of

attention ; and here ardent religionists have often gone beyond their limits. And for this reason there has arisen a repulsion from spiritual authority which has largely entered into the judgments of men. The sanction of the church which carries most weight with thoughtful persons is its practical efficiency as one of the working factors of society. It is better understood and appreciated as a reality than as a divine power. As one of the permanent elements that enter into the continuous life of humanity, it no more loses its higher spiritual character when it is mainly valued for its human uses, than the family and the state are shorn of their divine authority when they are regarded only with reference to the ends which they serve. Each depends upon the other for functions which impart strength to society, and each has its sanction in its necessity to the welfare of humanity. The church has always maintained, along with the assertion of its divine character, close re-

lations with the state and with the family. It has worked through both, and has itself been shaped and modified by both. In the patriarchal and Jewish dispensations, the family and the state were overshadowed by the theocracy, but they were still the two arms by which the Hebrew Church built up life within the Jewish nation and sustained social and political order. If it transcended the limits which would be allowed to-day, it did no harm where life was still narrowed to the knowledge and doing of few things. At the beginning of the Christian dispensation, Christianity stood outside of the world and asked to be admitted. Its claims to be listened to had to be vouched for. The family and the state, as permanent factors of society, had been organized without its sanction, though not without an institution intended to serve its purpose, and did not feel the need of its assistance; and yet there was the vacant place in the social order which the religious element in neither Greek nor

Roman civilization could fill, and which Christianity supplied with wonderful rapidity when it gained leverage in the world and began to control the lives of men. Though it entered society through the members of Cæsar's household, it did not stop until it had ascended Cæsar's throne. The early history of Christianity is the record of a continuous conflict between the social and spiritual forces in each generation. The natural law of the family and of the state is not in accord with the Christian ideal of what these institutions should be. The church with its credentials in its hands is forcing its way to the head of civilization, and is engaged in reconstructing the social and religious beliefs of men at every step. It is not surprising that paganism colored Christianity, that the pagan idea of the family and the state found recognition in the church, and that, in the absence of the individual freedom of modern life, the family should become shriveled and the monarchical element in

the state should gain the ascendancy even in the church. The relation was too close for the results to be otherwise. The picture of apostolic Christianity in its simplicity, in its freshness, in its beauty, is imperfectly realized after the church has entered upon its world-career and undertakes to maintain spiritual purposes with carnal weapons. Not that families are not Christians, or that the state is not under spiritual control ; but the freedom of each is lost through a form of society in which liberty of action for the individual has not been secured. When the church has control, it is too often Cæsar's hand that carries the pastoral staff, and the social conditions are unfavorable for the natural action of Christian principles. It is difficult to see the situation as it really was, because the materials for its reconstruction have been overweighted and put out of sight by a purely ecclesiastical view of Christianity, and because the church, when it gained through the Papacy the

control of western civilization, had joined hand in hand with elements that carried it far away from its free and natural influence upon society. It is easy to infer that, with Christianity in the form of despotic authority, and with the integrity of the Christian family constantly threatened by monachism and the living in communities, the free and natural development of human society in its distinctive elements was greatly interfered with up to the time of the Reformation. What the church accomplished was the holding of vital truth and the maintenance of its hereditary and apostolic organization; it failed because it absorbed into itself the functions which belong to the state, and took its tone too much from the secular power. The family was ignored. The individual was felt neither in the church nor in the state as a personal element. The history of those times makes much of individuals, but they were persons bent upon working through the church or the state for per-

sonal ends, and do not fairly represent the free and natural action of institutions upon society.

One needs to study history with large sympathies for the imperfect development of great and fundamental ideas, if he is not to lose his faith in the divine movement of the world. The two institutions which should have advanced in peace and unity from the beginning — the church and the state — have been at war with one another since the conversion of Constantine, chiefly because the prerogative of the church in spiritual affairs had been claimed as its right in secular life, and in this conflict the spiritual movement of the world had its opportunity constantly delayed. The progress of society satisfies no theorist; but in a large view of the order of events, there is, if not the ideal result, such an advance, or such an opening of new features, that the working hopes of humanity are encouraged and maintained. And this is the outcome of

the period during which the Christian Church lived through the transition from the ancient world to modern life. You can trace, if you will, beneath the enormous mass of details, the imperfect and restrained operation of the family, the state, and the church,—none of them free, none of them willing to trust the others, yet each compelled to accept some *modus vivendi* and wait for better days.





CHAPTER III.

The Church in Modern Life.

THE modern world begins with the Reformation, with the outburst of intellectual and spiritual life that had long been waiting its opportunity. The Reformation itself was a twofold movement: it took the direction of spiritual independence, but it was quite as distinctly political as it was spiritual. The world had outgrown the church's interpretation of it and insisted that the church should allow a larger and different expansion of the social and spiritual needs of men. The state felt the necessity of asserting its independence of the church. The original institutions of society were making their strongest efforts since the primitive days to give an increased free-

dom to individual life. The consciousness of the civilized world was thoroughly awakened; but the interest in the family, which had long been choked by its more powerful rivals, the church and the state, was not aroused in the same degree. The contest of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was mainly the struggle between the church and the state to establish the precedence of the one over the other. Sometimes the one led, sometimes the other, but the effort was always an attempt to reach a result for which the world was not quite prepared. A study of the history of the collective church since the Reformation reveals this widening of the too close embrace of the church and state during the Middle Ages, and the assertion of a freer, more expansive, more truly individual life, which has made a sphere for itself in civil society. In other ages man was a member of the family, of the state, of the church, and expressed his individuality through this membership; but since

the Reformation he has more and more asserted his personality, his conscious self-existence, his right to think for himself. It is this largeness and freedom of movement which is specially expressed by the modern meaning of the term civil society. This was not unknown to the Greeks, and before the Reformation it existed wherever the people had gained industrial or commercial freedom; but so soon as men began to enter into a larger sense of their individual rights, they sought a common sphere in which to exercise them, and civil society is this sphere in modern life. Society has been mainly dominated since the Reformation by hostility to institutions which fetter one's personality and restrict his freedom. A large number of the religious movements that grew out of the Reformation made this principle the basis of opposing the institutional order of society and of gaining larger liberty for the individual. The political parties in the state have proceeded mainly upon the

same idea. It has been difficult to maintain the principle that society is based upon permanent institutions. Not to multiply illustrations, and confining attention to the church alone, there has been a wide departure from that intense spirit of organization that pervaded every element of society in the Middle Ages, and protected, while it restricted, the movements of men. The individual man has been determined to have his own way in all things, and the aggregate of the life of the people has brought the state and the church alike to a point where their permanent relations to the common welfare are often overlooked by the people at large. There has been an entire revolution since Wycliffe breathed the spirit of a Christian freeman into the church life of England, and Luther spoke out of his inner consciousness in Germany.

It is necessary to give this point a larger statement than the simple noting of the fact, because it covers the whole

ground of the modern church. Political and religious movements have been closely allied in the history of mankind. This is as true of the ancient as of the modern world. The tendency in both church and state for the last three centuries has been strongly toward individual liberty, and the drift in religion has been toward a democratic church in a free nation. The authority of institutions as privileged orders is now constantly denied, and there is a profound distrust of whatever is weighted by traditions. There is a view of life that justifies these radical positions. You cannot measure modern life by the rules that fitted an entirely different state of society. The old life of the world must cast off its ancient habit if it is to meet the conditions of the new day, and this is what democratic society has done in the last century and is doing in this; but while the surface movement has been of this sort, there has been a far different movement beneath the visible order. So-

ciety thrives and survives like the strong oak of the pasture because it strikes its root deep down into life. It cannot exist without the economic laws or the institutional order. The instincts of nature and the dictates of right reason alike preserve the conditions by which the life of men is dependent upon permanent organizations. It is here that the conservative view of society justifies itself and institutions are seen in their bearing upon personal character. There must be a political check upon pure democracy, if government is not to drift into anarchy. There must be an ecclesiastical check upon pure voluntarism in religion, if the church is not to lose its title to authority and reverence among men.

The influence of the Reformation is here deeply felt. The whole output of modern life has been the assertion of a principle which is destructive to the integrity of social order, and yet it is this principle of order which is perhaps more

precious than any other in the estimation of men. The material and personal gains of life spring from the incentives that come to one and act as spurs to the powers within him ; but they fail to make the most of a man, unless, as the head of a family, as a citizen, and as a servant of God, he is in his place in the institutions which have been organized in the world for the preservation and purification of society. The weakness of modern life is in its severance from the permanent sources of power, which are expressed in family education, in intelligent citizenship, and in the Christian idea of character. There can be no substitute for these in any form of society, and the danger in the free development of present life is that what is permanent in the ordering of society shall be overshadowed by individual theory and experiment. The family is not sufficiently developed ; the tendency of the church is to become a club-house ; the state is the prey of politicians ; the church cannot

work freely and to advantage unless the family and the state are in harmony with its purpose; and it is in reaching out to a reconciliation between what is permanent and what is experimental that the spiritual regeneration of society is to find its fulfillment. This is the task that is before the Christian Church in every nationality where it has ancient or recent foothold. It is as imperative, in its demands, in the older civilization as in the new. It is to become a working factor in free society, not supreme as in the Middle Ages, not overborne by the state as often during the last two centuries in England and in Continental Europe, not an incipient and permitted power as in the first Christian days, but gaining the consent of the best minds and leading the thought of the world, because it teaches and preserves the traditions of the past and expresses the free convictions of men, endowed with liberty, in such a union that the continuous order of Christian thought is transmitted, with

its full power to sustain and guide the expansive and intensive life of the individual man.

The modern church in the United States must first be studied in its historical development. The religion of this country has been characterized as "a commonwealth of sects." The American colonies represented the various dissenters of the German and English reformations, no less than the English and Roman parts of the historical church; and with all the attempts to establish a state religion in the different provinces, the result was a formal separation of the church from the state, whose union, under varying relations in Christian history, has been the chief source of contention at the great centres of civilization. But there has never been in America an authorized form of religion. One ecclesiastical body has ruled in one section, another in another; but universal consent has been given to none. The church has been in the condition of organized schism from the begin-

ning. The unity has not been that of creed or polity, but the unity of baptism into the body of Christ. The principle of the Reformation, that the church is the product of a consensus of opinion gathered from the Christian and Hebrew Scriptures, has given one sect as good authority as another, and each one has struggled to obtain the largest following possible. Even the historical churches, like the English and the Roman, and possibly the Moravian, have stood upon the same footing in the thought of the people. The effect has been, that, while society was controlled by the rigid views of the reigning sect, there has been an outward conformity to religious institutions ; but when the ecclesiastical regime lost its hold upon the community, the church, so called, stood only for an idea, an opinion, not for institutional order, not for social construction, not for a conception of God's relation to the world, which is coextensive with the active community and with the whole of humanity.

The church in America to-day resembles the English colonies in this country in their conscious lack of power to organize society upon a basis that included the interests of all the people. Political necessity, after the Revolution, constantly aided by the efforts of statesmen, from Hamilton to Webster, at length rooted in the thoughts of men the idea of nationality, and the country now feels the fructifying vitality of the nation as a political institution; but no such unity of thought and action has been reached in the organization of our ecclesiastical life. The great defect of the German Reformation—that it organized society, not by expanding the existing church (as was the case, to a degree, in England) to the dimensions of the increased meaning of life to the individual, but by breaking loose from the church to create new organizations to do the work that could have best been done by reforming agencies within, which were partially secured in the Council of Trent, and might

have been vastly better secured if Luther and his companions had been present at its deliberations — has been multiplied until it is the existing hindrance and obstacle of Christianity in every American town and village. The defect is in the inadequacy of the thing that exists in the place of the church to control the spiritual life of the whole people; and until an organization is reached which brings together all Christian agencies in a given community under an administration that represents ecclesiastical economy and the true conservation of forces, our religious societies, of all names, will continue to fail, as they have heretofore failed, to do for the community what they aim to do for the individual. The existing organizations do not express the power of the working church of primitive days in our industrial, social, and ethical life. Christ is not acknowledged in his place in the institutions which God has planted in the world for the preservation and purification

of society. The weakness of modern life is in its severance from the natural strength that comes from the family education, from an intelligent citizenship, and from the Christian idea of character. There can be no substitute for these fundamental and permanent forms and institutions.

The survey of our American denominational development from this point of view leads to instructive conclusions.





CHAPTER IV.

The Church in Disintegration.

THE chief characteristic of the church in the Middle Ages was that it included the industrial, social, and political interests of the community under spiritual direction. The life of the period was far less expansive than the same life is at the present day, but the interests to a degree were the same which they are now. The church by special legislation and parochial provision met the common necessities of the community without going outside of itself. The place of the collective Christian organizations in democratic society to-day is in the strongest possible contrast with their rank in the old institutional order. The special agencies which the church once controlled are now largely beyond its pale, and are mostly without religious direction.

The church has parted with its social jurisdiction. The hospitals, the provident societies, the relief associations, the friendly orders, the reformation of criminals, are more often outside of the Christian churches than under their control. If the church is still associated with the state in this work, it is as one of the agencies in a field which in monastic England and in the old Gallic Church was wholly within the confines of ecclesiastical authority. The increase of the work of this sort is due to the great and universal development of individual power in modern society. The church has not kept pace with this development. The Roman communion has intended to do this ; the Anglican body has kept it in view ; the different Protestant organizations have maintained the theory that nothing which concerns the life of society is outside of the scope of Christian treatment ; the view of social order in the Middle Ages is still substantially held in theory ; but it is seldom that the Chris-

tian Church is found dealing to-day in a large and organic way with the benevolent, educational, or social interests of the community. The life of men has come to be so much outside of the ecclesiastical environment that the world has pushed the church out of its old centre, and built up all sorts of organizations to do its work of reformation and renewal. It is difficult to realize that the church was ever anything more than it is in our American towns at the present day; and yet even in our cherished localities, the attempt was made hardly more than two centuries ago to organize the community on such an ecclesiastical basis that the spiritual power should have the supremacy in all departments of life. It was the attempt to make the church autocratic by taking away the freedom of the individual in a community where the people were politically the makers of the state, and the individual was the social unit.

It was not a long step to a revolt from

this order of things, and, when it came, it meant the defeat of the collective church in the element of social power. All Protestant bodies since the Reformation have felt the influence of the revolt of the individual from obedience to religious rule. The harmony between social and spiritual order on the one side and the liberty of the individual as a member of society on the other has not been cultivated. The Christian societies lost their central place when they broke away from the national church or the Roman obedience, in the old world; and in the new, the collective church, though it began in England as the ruler of society, was so arbitrary in its rulings that it interfered with social and personal liberty and could not be tolerated. It did not allow free scope to the individual under the general direction of Christian institutions. The result was that at an early day the line was drawn between religion and society; and the two elements which find their mutual strength

in union were hopelessly sundered and have ever since been kept apart in our religious development. It was the Puritan who drew this vicious line between the church and the world, and alienated the social from the religious life. In England and France the national church has done much to transmit the social integration of religion with life, so that the separation has not been so marked as it is in a country where national religious institutions do not exist. It is not to be denied that the Christianity of this country is an immense power; it is here simply pointed out that from the beginning it has missed one of the prime elements of influence in the social world. It has not been homogeneous with our political or social life. It has been a continual contest between two separate views of Christianity—the institutional presentation of truth and the regeneration of the individual; and this contest is to-day, what it was one or two hundred years ago, the dividing line in all

our efforts to bring the Christian Church into the central position where it can do for modern society what it did for the average man and woman of the Middle Ages, when monastic and other Christian institutions were scattered all over England and Western Europe.

The collective church is separated to-day, as it has been since the Standing Order was overthrown in New England, from the secular interests of life. This separation is one of our national traditions. It is not only separation, but division. The different denominations compel the maintenance of different organizations. This develops the separatist principle with reference to one another. The support of these establishments draws the Christian members away from the central interests of society and commits them to the support of ecclesiasticism. This naturally intensifies the national religious weakness of separating things sacred from things secular, so that there is little direct help to be derived

from the Christian societies toward improving the moral life of the people. In many things our present ecclesiasticism works directly against the interests which Christian persons should be anxious to promote. Both in our towns and in our villages the maintenance of rival parochial organizations withdraws from the community much of the influence of the most worthy people, who feel obliged to work for their parishes instead of looking after the real prosperity of the whole family of God in the community.

The practical operation of Christianity in this form is to separate into cliques persons who ought to be in earnest coöperation with each other. They cannot have as their first aim the good of the whole. Their very attitude toward the community is wrong ; they are not free to do what the large heart prompts them to undertake. The conception of the Christian religion that is in practical operation is a contradiction of the state of things which Chris-

tianity is intended to produce. The people are divided into cliques who do separately what should be done by the collective church in the community with the spirit of one man. Different religionists define their positions with reference to one another and exalt dogma above the interests of the whole population. The tendency is to narrow their views, to contract their range of thought, to prevent the church as an institution from being identified with the secular welfare of the people; and this is where the Christian life of the country is most seriously checked at the present time. It is the welfare of the denomination, not the welfare of the entire Church of God, which receives attention, and so far as this spirit prevails, it is partially antagonistic to the influence which Christianity ought to have upon towns, villages, and neighborhoods. It is impossible for the pastor of a congregation in a town or village to do for the citizens what he might do if the people were entirely under his

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parochial charge. Hostility or at least rivalry exists between two or more separate organizations, and things are not seen from the central point of unity. The Christian Church has come to represent a certain religious order rather than an inspiring principle.

Where there is no national church, it is not easy to supply its place. Where the church is not central in society, it is not at the point where it can do the most for the social and personal amelioration of the people. The difficulty with our organization of religion is that it does too little for social interests. It aims to do more for a man in the next life than it helps him to perform in the life that now is. The need of the working church is greater than men recognize, and this cannot be at its best where those who meet together are not agreed, and willing to coöperate in essential things. The narrowness of the different bodies which constitute the Church of Christ in the United States is a great

drawback to their usefulness. Their working principle is opposed to comprehension. They have a creed which is narrower and more definite within certain limits than the complete statement of the facts of Christianity, and this acts as a limit to the work which they aim to do. Each separate organization has something less than the force and strength of the whole Church of Christ. This is acknowledged in its very name, as well as in the details or omissions of its creed. It often represents an opinion about the Christian religion rather than the full substance of that religion. This is inevitable from the very condition of things, and the deficiency in the creed is responsible for the lack of comprehension which still further alienates the church from the social activities of the people. This is deeply felt as a serious deficiency in the Christian forces of England by men like Dr. James Martineau, who sees in the exclusiveness of its range of action the failure of the existing church in Great

Britain to meet the demands of the religious life of the nation. He would secure such a federation of the present religious forces that the conception of the working church should be coextensive with the thought and spirit and activity of the entire people. This would go far to restore Christianity to the place which it held in the earlier ages, when it was the religion of the entire nation, not of cliques, some of which hold to one part of the faith and some to another.

The combination of our American Christian organizations in such a way that the strength of each shall be felt in the increasing comprehensiveness of all is the method of escape from the serious limitations which now stand in the way of their usefulness. The national mark of our religion is that it does not control society. The religious element is absent from the common life of the people. What social and common life most need is a larger recognition of spiritual purpose. The

nation has not yet recovered from the dividing line, introduced by the Puritans, which separates practical Christianity from the broader activities in which every citizen is expected to find his sphere of work. The general conception of the Christian Church is based upon this line of distinction and manifests itself in a thousand modifications of current thought and life. Nothing like the English method of operation is possible here, because in this country all religious societies are equal in power and opportunity; but the gradual change of view in looking at the situation, so that the things held in common shall become more prominent, and the points of divergence shall recede into their proper insignificance, seems to be leading to that larger purpose and experience through which all these bodies are to be delivered from the limitations of their creeds and their methods.



CHAPTER V.

The Church in the World.

THE difference between the church and the state in modern society is that the state still deals with humanity as a whole, while the church has no jurisdiction over a large portion of the people. The church is an organization within the state, not coextensive with it. And yet the influence which the church has always had in controlling the moral and spiritual interests of society is more needed now than it was when institutions were all-prevailing and the freedom of the individual had not been secured. When the family life is not protected, it is difficult to secure the education necessary to make the good citizen; when the state fails to educate its members in the duties of citizen-

ship, the nation is unable to protect its interests; and when the church has no influence over a large portion of the people, it is difficult to maintain the constant appeal to the conscience of men which secures the supremacy of moral rights and keeps fresh their sense of duty to one another. The state simply regulates existing conditions; it does not introduce a new view of present life. The church, on the other hand, represents the ethical and spiritual motives which give moral power to the state and impart moral and spiritual tone to society. It bases its authority not on what the individual is compelled to concede to others for the sake of the common weal, but on the brotherhood of men and their mutual dependence on one another. It represents the moral ideal of human society, and its aim and purpose is to introduce that ideal into the world-order. Though its aim is moral, where that of the state is political and economic, it derives its authority not

only from the consent of the governed, but from the Divine Person whom it represents; it is influential only so far as its teachings and principles are accepted by individuals or by the community. And yet without this insistence on moral and spiritual sanctions, the state feels the absence of that authority, coördinate with itself yet distinctly spiritual, which relates the unseen God to the social world in which his purposes are recorded in the processes of history.

In our own time the state has "slowly broadened down from precedent to precedent," until it is a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." The church has not followed to the same degree the tendency to spiritual democracy, though it must always find its sphere through the agency of the people in order to fulfill its mission among men. The problem before the Christian Church to-day is whether it can maintain its spiritual prerogative and be as truly the ministrant

to the unguided multitudes of our day as it was the guide and inspiration of the thousands who first believed in Christianity and felt the inspiration of the new convictions of life and duty which it gave to them. This problem presses hard upon those who are seeking the solution of our industrial and social difficulties. The breaking away of the individual from the institutional restraints of another age has resulted in placing people, in a religious point of view, outside of the general covenant relation with the church by baptism, which, if it did not impart to them personal righteousness, at least maintained the feeling of relationship to a great religious order, which was not without some general influence upon their lives. They now simply stand up in the social ranks, entirely ignoring the work of an institution which, regarded even in a worldly point of view, is the complement of the state in regulating the life of society. Speaking generally, the church to-day is an insti-

tution maintained by those who are able to support it. In democratic society it derives no advantage from the state and asks no favors, but stands aside from the rush of political and industrial interests and deals by consent with the unworldly element in life. The day has forever passed when the threats of excommunication can make men tremble. The power of the church as a spiritual corporation armed with extreme penalties has been lost and is not to return. Its strength is no longer in its penalties, but in its relations of service to the universal brotherhood of men. It is the collective church which is here spoken of, not this or that section of it; and this collective church stands in a peculiarly transitional relation to modern society. In our free and individual life, it is impossible to maintain its supremacy along the old lines of procedure, and there is a general halt to see what it is best to do. Different families of Chris-

tians have worked out different results; some have verged to the extreme of democracy in their methods, and others still cling with great tenacity to a style of thought and methods of work which restrict their influence chiefly to special classes of people. Amid these divisions, the narrowness of the sect has the power to restrict the range of thought and keep our different organizations of Christianity from seeing the situation in the large. It has been remarked that American religious bodies have shown less power to adapt themselves to the changed conditions of modern society than the mother churches in Europe from which they sprang. This is undoubtedly true, and the greatest weakness of our collective Christianity to-day is that the leaders of its different sections have too little capacity to rise to a clear view of the position in which Christianity stands to the whole American people. There is no national religion corresponding, in breadth

of view and in elasticity of methods, to our national government, and men see, for the most part, only so far as the limits of the sect with which they are connected. This prevents the adaptation of our religious methods to the needs of the people as a whole, as an integral portion of mankind. The organization of our religious life is too narrow for its proper expansion. It is found that our government, though not changed in its fundamental principles, is constantly changing in the stress brought to bear upon this or that part of our general system, and the same process is going on irresistibly in the ecclesiastical life of the people. There is an appeal to a constantly growing conception of life. It is the free expansion of this life which the churches, wedded to methods of work or conceptions of doctrine which have served their purpose, are too slow to appreciate; and it is here that the great gap is found to-day between the American church and American life. Until

the church in the person of its leaders rises to the conception of its duty to give a fresh social conception to Christianity, a conception which manifests insight into the present ordering of life and displays the mastery of its conditions, the masses of the people must continue to feel that for all their higher interests the different religious societies can do them little good. When the whole world is entering upon a new development of industrial and commercial possibilities, it stands to reason that neither the church nor the state can occupy the same position that they held a century ago. The state has changed; it responds with alacrity to the convictions of the people; but the church, because it deals, not with the temporalities of the people, but with their spiritual condition, has made the mistake of separating in its thought and management the industrial and social from the moral and spiritual life. The line of separation may be imaginary, but it exists in the class or club

idea as the basis of church action, and in prejudices to this end which are not easily eradicated from the minds of those who have nothing to gain in a worldly sense from ecclesiastical connections. The church is in the world, if it fulfills its mission, not to help those who have most present advantages, but to leaven society not less than the lives of individual men and women with the mind and the spirit which were in Jesus Christ. It is this large and free and modern conception of the Church of Christ which is yet to be fully realized among us. It is here that the broader Kingdom of God is to be begun.

The Church of Christ is to-day all that it ever was in its essence, in its spiritual functions, in its possession of the spirit of the living God. The individual, in the growth of his sense of personality, in the possibilities of his greater personal development, in his mastery of the world beyond himself, is more than he ever was.

This individual is the representative of the forces in the world which are yet to be controlled and elevated by spiritual means, and the Church of Christ is still the chief instrument by which the moral regeneration of society is to be effected. How shall the church be reinforced to meet the just expectations of those who believe in its instrumental power? How shall it receive back into its fold the children of those who have broken away from its sanctions and discipline? How shall the conscience that anticipates and maintains justice be restored to the social and industrial life of the community? How shall the toiling millions be made to feel that there is anything in life but a toilsome journey from the cradle to the grave? Is the Christian Church to command the situation, or are the people connected with religious societies to be one company, and the persons who have lost all hope of any betterment of life through the church to form another? These questions

are asked, not by the careless and unthinking, but by those who survey the religious interests of the people in their national significance. It is one thing to reckon the host of Israel and count numbers as prosperity; it is quite another to bring the Ark of God into the centre of the host where its presence shall reanimate all men with the convictions for which it stands.

What does society most need to-day? The industrial revolution is scarcely more marked than the political revolution. There is an unmistakable unwillingness to go to the past for antecedents or for authority. The thought of every man is occupied with the work of reconstruction, and there is no sphere of life or thought which escapes this ordeal. The religious interests of the community are under the same movement, and what is called the "new theology" is nothing more than the adaptation of abiding truths to the changed conditions of thought. The church moves

last because it is naturally even more institutional in its character than the state, slower to receive new ideas, and more powerful to hold society steadfast to what is of permanent obligation. All the elements of society are in motion to-day, but the political and industrial attract most attention because they are most immediate and affect the greatest number of people. The first need of such a time as our own is that moral principles shall have unimpaired influence. This is a simple point to make, but whoever has watched the development of the industrial issues between the capitalists and the workmen whom they employ will have noted that every question between them involves a moral principle. The one party is attempting to take advantage of the other. The state may interpose as arbitrator, but though in its evolution it is as a whole a moral agent and is endowed with moral personality, it is only commissioned to act under the forms of law, and these forms are the only

expression of moral purpose with which the state is directly concerned. The government is an arrangement for the regulation of liberty. The inspiration and uplifting of society comes from another quarter. The moral purpose comes from individuals ; but its solidarity is not secured through single individuals, no matter how valuable their moral qualities may be, but through the aggregate or corporate presentation of their influence in the forms of institutional life. To illustrate : the religious society in a particular village may contain perhaps half-a-dozen individuals who have great personal influence ; but their weight as individuals is one thing, and the influence of the Christian organization which absorbs their moral weight and converts it into institutional power for righteousness in the community is immensely greater and more powerful. This is the difference between personality and institutional power. This is the vantage ground of the Christian Church as an

influence in the present changes of society. If the permanently valuable elements of our social order are retained, it will be because the direct and indirect forces of righteousness which go forth from the aggregated Christian organizations of the land have acquired the institutional power to prevail over the looseness and weakness of individual life.

There is more than the need of moral principles. There is the need of a larger estimate of the value and meaning of life, which comes not from the sense of justice, though it has this sense behind it, but from a recognition of each man's right to live and enjoy a fair share of the rights and privileges that are the common inheritance of all. The relations between man and man are not elevated enough to secure this result ; you are not sure of it ; the state, though divine as an institution, does not emphasize the divine sanctions of social action. But when the Christian motive of kindness is introduced and Christian

brotherhood is felt to be the model of social order as God would have it, life takes on a new character and the world is a good place to live in. It is Christianity felt in the community as a permanent institution of society which adds this grace to life. The moral atmosphere of a town or city is the impression which is produced by the general influence of the church among the people. The closer the church is connected with the interests of the community the stronger is the impression it makes ; and it is this influence, the action of the church upon the family and upon public opinion, and their combined action upon the individual, which is chiefly to impart cheer to the great company of bread-winners in the slow evolution of new relations between capital and labor. The state administers justice as between man and man. The church appeals to the conscience and kindles the sense of right and wrong ; it stands between both parties, as often allied with the one as with the other, but

never the antagonist of either ; it has the difficult task of obtaining recognition for an authority which is the highest influence in life, and yet has no power to compel direct assent or obedience to its injunctions ; it deals with immaterial forces, and its influence is often strongest when its direct authority is least. The touch that is to renew the hopes of men and again make life delightful is the touch of the Church of Christ, the touch of a helping hand among the poor, the touch of kindness of heart in dealing with one another, the touch of a keener sense of what can be done for humanity at large, the touch of a relation in which the forces of a divine love are felt in the ordinary circumstances of life.

To sum it all up in a sentence, it is the ethical relation of the church to the community which is most powerful to-day ; it is the influence which changes society while it changes the individual. And this result is not reached by the usual instru-

mentalities, because they are not ethically adequate for the work expected of them. The church is apt to be formalized, and its methods are too much the methods of a past generation. The successful method is that which deals with the present convictions of men and women as to the social pressure in daily life, and is able to carry their hopes and thoughts to a higher level. Wherever this method—which is not a stereotyped method but depends upon the kind of sympathy that different neighborhoods need—has been employed, the response has been immediate and gratifying. There is no time like one of profound social and industrial agitation in which to put truth before men with the hope that it may take root in their hearts and bring forth fruit in their lives. The formal things of the church, however important in themselves as the conservators of spiritual order, are not like the ethical power of the spirit of life. The work of the church is to change and renew lives, and this is to

be accomplished through its general relation to society and through its special relation to individuals. But its work is not confined to its own members. It has the world as its field, and its formative work in the entire round of human effort is the sphere in which the call is now most urgent. It is for this reason that the chronic disturbances in industry have the deepest ethical interest. They are the result of slow changes in the general structure of society; they are the evolution of a new industrial order; they are the result of economic forces which are as yet imperfectly estimated. What they imply may be an advance for the race, but the advance like all progress will be by spiral lines, not rapid, not always assuring, not equal to human wishes, but waiting on the command of the Divine Ruler of men. The advance, the enlightenment, will be the gradual perception, amid great and continuous disorder, of the essential and true brotherhood of men under a common

Father. It is the church as the guide and inspiration of humanity which is most needed to-day, and it is this character of the church which is now brought forward where its work is most successful. The demand is that the ordinary life of men shall be improved, and it is felt that in some vague way, though the world is full of the manifestations of human kindliness, the church is able to secure this improvement and renewal. The church has long been the pet of the higher classes and the luxury of the few; it is felt alike within and without its confines that the time has come for its broader identification with all the interests of life. The ethical work of the future will be this identification.





CHAPTER VI.

The Inclusive Church.

THE realization of the presence of God in the forces of the world is one of the difficulties which human experience has done little to remove. It seems often easier to see God in nature than in the processes of life. The evidence of a personal Deity is demonstrated in nature by the witness of mind directing what men call law; but in the sphere of the moral and social world, where the will of man has to do with the ordering of life, where the complexity of existence hides the simplicity of action, it seems as if God were out of sight, and the convictions of society go far to conceal his presence. In the sphere of secondary causes it requires some effort to go behind their action and realize the direction of God in the world;

and yet the higher life of every man is based upon the immanence of God in our daily life. Human actions are right or wrong as they are in harmony with or contradict the ultimate standard which in the last analysis is believed to be the will of God. Human events seem for a generation to be in the hands of human leaders, and we see the marks of their grasp of things; but in the space of two or three generations the order of events and the action of ideas upon the social life are seen to be under the control of a higher law of continuity than that of human design. Men lose their hold of affairs, but God never relaxes his grasp; and in the long avenues of history men note that One who is unseen has builded better than they knew. Human consciousness is the great centre of appeal for the unity of impressions, stronger or weaker in different persons, which recognize the presence of God in the life of men. There are few well-developed minds that do not in some

way acknowledge this presence and wait upon its manifestations. Much as the world is run by the power of will and by material forces that are under the control of will, there is a consciousness, not born of superstition, which recognizes the divine movement in human society. It is not obtrusive, but like the music of the spheres it is heard and felt when it is listened for and noted. Elijah heard the still small voice when he found that there was nothing in the raging of the elements that had preceded it; and he heard it partly because his mind and heart were prepared to listen for it.

The practical inference from this large consciousness that God is ordering human society after a plan not fully disclosed to mankind, is that his presence is specially revealed in the moral and spiritual agencies which control the direction of life. God is revealed in the family as the agency not only for the propagation of life but for the training of life according to the

best light that our experience affords. The household in which we spend our earliest years is the training school in which our first impressions are fixed, and in which they are most firmly rooted. This is a natural school; it is a part of one's birthright. But it is only one of the agencies by which the life of the individual is controlled. The civil and industrial and political sphere, which is considered as the totality of the state in its relation to personal life, is the complement of the family training and constitutes the field in which one finds his place and usefulness. This has its material side, as also has the family; but in its higher character the state is a moral and even a spiritual organism, through which God acts upon civil society and educates mankind for their several duties. The church, as distinguished from the family and the state, is exclusively a moral and spiritual agency. It is concerned with the moral and spiritual direction and education of mankind.

Whether you take close or large ideas of its functions in human society, it is nothing less than an agency, like the state and the family, which is universal in its oversight of life and in its spiritual purpose toward mankind. While God is everywhere and no one escapes his observation, there is a closer sense in which God is in his church and has committed to it certain large interests pertaining to the welfare of mankind. Take the Church of the Jews for an illustration. This was a church coextensive with the nation, protecting its moral and spiritual interests, and constantly dealing with the people as a race under covenant relations. There is a largeness about the Church of the Jews which aptly shows how the institutional life of the people was represented by it. It is always the national body. It cares for the interests of the people as a race. It furnishes our best example in history of the way in which the race-consciousness of a remarkably

spiritual people was controlled by religious instrumentalities. Ewald has brought out this feature of the theocracy strongly in his "History of Israel," and whoever studies the Old Testament with ordinary attention will realize it for himself. The church and the state were almost identical in the Jewish theocracy, but the illustration shows in what sense the Christian Church becomes a living force even in a modern community when it acts upon society as a corporate whole. In Christian history there are many instances in which the church has had a controlling power over great peoples and given them a unity in their development under the forms of civil society which they could not otherwise have reached. Where a race or a nation has come under the lead of a comprehensive spiritual organization, there has been a corresponding largeness of purpose or design ; and in a formal way God is said to dwell with these people through his church as well as in their in-

dividual hearts. There is something implied in the formal church which is less implicitly expressed in the world outside. The church is the sphere of man's spiritual education. It is represented by hundreds of parishes, reaching to every collection of individuals throughout the land, coming down through the methods of doing spiritual work in these parishes to the individual mind and conscience, and working the personal regeneration of mankind. It is a great organization of instrumentalities, which not only affects society in the large, but penetrates like the sunlight into the darkest recesses of humanity. It is not discharging its functions successfully when it is simply an ecclesiastical organization which covers a certain territory, or when it exerts its power in a formal way in upholding moral and spiritual agencies in the country; it needs the complement of personal experience of the message of God through Christ to the individual soul before it can

be said that the church has measured the true reason of its power. All comprehensive ideas of Christianity need to be supplemented by the personal relation in which the soul stands to God before they can operate with the warmth and strength that belong to them. The comprehensive church is nothing more than the Christianity which is before the country in the aggregate, but when considered in its comprehensive form or in the totality of its influence it stands out quite differently from what it seems in the light of its divisions.

The one thing that has been missed in our own country has been this comprehensive form of Christianity. There has been not only no national organization of religion, but most Christians have never thought or worked outside of the religious cliques in which they were brought up or in which they have found themselves. The church has not been thought of as an institution as grand, as comprehensive, as universal, as all-embracing as our na-

tional consciousness. It has not been regarded as coextensive with the nation and the family among the institutions by which God permits men to govern the world. It has not lifted its voice in national affairs as the Hebrew prophets lifted up their voices at critical periods in the history of Israel. It has not made itself felt as a unit in dictating the national policy on questions in which ethics enter as a national factor. It has not controlled and guided our civilization so as to give a Christian character to the national consciousness. It has not carried into the world's life the emphatic convictions of a Christian people. American Christianity is weak to-day because it has no recognized voice. There is no national note about it. Whether Protestant or Catholic, it is the religion of specialists, and has no national or race significance. In a certain sense, it fails to carry the weight of God behind it. It speaks for something less than this, when the full weight of God's

commission to an authorized church, which is also the church of the people of the nation, is not its charter and its present consciousness. The restoration of this consciousness ; the reaching out to national conceptions of Christianity ; the making of the religion of the people as significant as their politics ; the placing of the emphasis upon great and central ideas of national morality, of national education, of the national bearing of industrial, economic, and social questions ; the reaching of something like unity in the general spiritual consciousness of the people, — is the direction in which the immanence of God in human society, and especially in the moral and spiritual agencies through which society expresses itself, takes on the character of nationality. The Church of Christ is but a poor makeshift so long as it comes short in modern society of the greatness and the majesty of the Jewish Church when that organization controlled Hebrew existence. So long

as it depends upon this or that sectarian and partial exhibition of its capabilities in dealing with the questions which concern humanity, so long as it stops short of realizing its progressive power through the devising of liberal things, so long as it fails to hold before the community the greatness and the grandeur of Christian institutions, it will fail to fulfill its divine mission in society. The church to-day in America no longer satisfies anybody who considers its possibilities and compares them with its performance. And this dissatisfaction is largely due to the smallness of the conception of what Christianity is; to the consideration of its development as a sectarian institution, set to the propagation of certain ideas and not careful to see whether they are in accord with the large conception of Christianity which includes the whole of a nation's existence and interests; and to the contentment of people with the imperfect working out of the ideas of social

and spiritual uplifting which constitute the concrete power of Christianity in the community.

The Church of Christ, operative in the affairs of men as the chief agency for righteousness in the world, should express the largest conception of the higher life which it is possible to entertain. In Plato's Republic the ideal state passes in its beautiful form before the eye, and its functions correspond to the perfect life. Likewise in the Christian Church the ideal of what the church in its collective form ought to be passes in view before the mind's eye, and its possibilities of service to modern society are more delightful when traced with the imagination than when they are made to tally with actual fact. The church of to-day has to recover what it has lost since the end of the Middle Ages and the rise of civil society. Then it controlled education, social institutions, the great guilds, the family life, the entire outward existence of men. It had

the word of command over social life. Afterwards, the individual man, the representative of personal liberty, appeared and broke the spell of this charmed existence. It was then said that the church existed to save the individual soul ; and when the Reformation came, it was the individual soul that men thought of, not the saving of society. The one ought never to have been separated from the other. In the Roman and in the Anglican Churches the one has always been considered as important as the other ; but wherever pure Protestantism has prevailed, the social side of Christianity has been lost to a great extent, because the stress has been laid too exclusively upon the renewal of the individual soul. The institutional conception of Christian society has been overlooked. Accordingly, Christianity is what you see it almost everywhere in America, a movement bearing the character of a spent or a misapplied or an unwisely directed force. This religious body believes in the univer-

sality of the atonement ; that organization holds to the speedy second coming of our Lord ; one would put the stress of the true church on a mode of baptism ; another would find the centre of interest in an emotional experience called conversion ; another would rest the salvation of men upon the acceptance of the perfect manhood of the historical Christ ; another would exalt Luther's dogma of justification by faith to the central place in the Christian system ; still another would throw away the entire Christian Church and begin anew with the teachings of Swedenborg. There is no unity in the conception of the Christian religion in these discordant systems, nothing which raises the enthusiasm of humanity, nothing which heartens one to believe in Christianity itself ; it is an opinion about the Christian religion with an argumentative support derived from the Bible, but there is no power in it to grasp vigorously the issues of life in the community and lead them in large

directions. People become religious, but their convictions are not compacted into regenerative motive power. Religious influence becomes conservative and conventional, and the spiritual thought moves in hard and well-worn ruts. There is not enough strength in this conventional Christianity to save it from dying. Parishes and ministers go their feeble rounds of routine service, but there is no enthusiasm in the work, and everything dies like vegetation in a time of drought because there is a lack of vitality in the earth and the air. This condition of affairs is familiar to all who have any experience with the different forms in which American Christianity has expressed itself. It is felt that the Christian religion is immensely larger than the common moulds in which it has been shaped and presented to men.

The condition of things in our own country turns one back to first principles. The Church of Christ needs to be idealized. It

is more inclusive, more controlling, more comprehensive, more helpful, more educating, more inspiring, more soul-strengthening, than it seems when it is seen in the hard realism of its actual limitations and conditions. It is well to keep the ideal before men in order that they may rise to the conception of ideal manhood, and the same is true of an institution which stands out in human society as the incarnation of the Divine Life. The church is the bride of Christ. It is the pillar and the ground of truth. It is the conservator of the divine movement in the world as it was once expressed in the Hebrew history and as it has been manifested in the historical facts concerning Jesus Christ. It is the institution which first among the Hebrews, and since the nativity of Jesus Christ among the Gentiles, has been the "light of the world." It is the continuous testimony to a power that acts upon the souls of men as the family acts upon their childhood, and as the state acts upon their

mature life. But in the family and in the state the testimony of the divine life is seen in the course of ordinary nature; it is the continuous control of life for beneficent ends. The church undertakes to deal, not only with the social sphere in which men find their field of practical usefulness, but with the higher life, the relation of the soul to God, the union of man with God, the development of the control of all human life by the recognition of its central source in God, the power breathed into men of being united by spiritual ties with the Christ, so that in reaching his perfect manhood they may reach the identification of the human will with the divine will, which is the source of the perfectness of his own life. Everything in the aim and purpose of the church as the representative of Christ on earth is to lift humanity into some faint human realization of what finds its ideal expression in the life and work of Christ as the Son of Man and also the Son of God.

We go to Christ, and to what the apostles have told us of his plans, for the working ideas of the Christian Church at any age of the world. And as often as reformers, who did not aim at the inauguration of a new dispensation, but only at the restoration of what they thought the church had lost in its contact with the state and the family, have returned to the simplicity of Christ's plans for the regeneration of the individual or of society, the blessing of God has attended their efforts. The result has proved the inspiration that exists in the collective church and in its power as the representative of Christ to regenerate the world. It is this Church, of which the existing divisions of the Christian family are the aggregate whole, which in any nation is the instrumentality for treating men as the children of God and teaching them their relations and duties to him. The church embraces every interest which pertains to the individual or social life in the community. It is first

of all an instrumentality for bringing the individual into closer relations with God through the remission of sin and the inspiration of help for a better living. Christianity gave men at the beginning the conception of the duties and the responsibilities of the individual. It dealt with man not as a member of the commonwealth, like that of the Jews, but as a responsible being who had his duties to God, as the Father Almighty, after the similitude of his duties to an earthly parent. It magnified the personal element in the individual till it reached the size of the world. It was to make the individual soul what God created it capable of being that Christ became incarnate, and took the lead in human redemption, and triumphed as the Son of God in the resurrection. But this was only the beginning of Christ's work for humanity. What Christ had done for the individual man he was to do for his fellow. Christianity from the start inculcated the brotherhood of mankind, and be-

came as broad as human society. It not only purposed to regenerate the individual, but to change the conditions of life which surrounded him. It has reached out to the state on the one hand and to the family on the other, and has allied itself with all kinds of natural goodness, until it has infused its spirit into every form of human society. This has been its twofold mission in the world.

It is from this point of view that its true position in modern life is to be considered. It is coextensive with the whole of the interests of mankind; and nothing better shows this than the discovery, in our sociological and economic studies of the present day, that all these lower questions find their solution in an ethical principle. Nothing pertaining to the welfare of man can be attentively considered which does not lead up to the Church of Christ as an important factor in the solution of the problem. Our present methods of realizing the power of the church in the world

represent certain definite ideas, but the progress of the individual in modern life and the increased complexity of society have brought the Christian Church face to face with the gravest matters which confront mankind, and they demand from its leaders, if the church be indeed what they claim for it, that higher direction which it should have as the keeper of the oracles of God. The whole breadth of modern life is the field in which the modern church is asked to expend its energies. It can never again go back to the simplicity of the first Christian centuries, nor to the small ideas of God's ordering of the world which used to pass for an adequate description of the functions of the church in society. It must either advance into the glorious service and destiny which open out to it in the larger life of men, or recede to an insignificant position among the forces which govern the world. There is an earnest questioning of the powers that be to-day in order to find out what they are

good for. Nothing is taken for granted, and the combination of the historical with the scientific method is felt in the realm of theology not less than in the study of the processes of history. The question which arises at every turn in our studies of actual life is, What shall be done to invest human activity with moral power and purpose? If the Christian Church is what we have been taught to believe it to be, what part shall it have in the new civilization?





CHAPTER VII.

The Spiritual Method of the Church.

WHILE the church is an important factor in civil society, it has a principle and method which are entirely peculiar to itself. Its aim is to take the individual man at his birth, or at a later period, and make him something which by nature he is not. It exists for the renewal of man in his spiritual functions, for the removal of whatever hinders his advance into purity and holiness of life, for the education of his spiritual aspirations and faculties so that he shall direct his life according to ideas and principles which are partly the accumulated wisdom of men at their best, and partly the truth of God revealed to men through the prophets of old and through his Son Jesus Christ. Its spiritual method is the process by which this

end is secured. This process is twofold. It is internal and relates to changes in the individual which are purely spiritual; it is external and has to do with the education of the soul in purity and righteousness and usefulness in the world.

The work of theology has been to formulate the process by which the soul is renewed, and all the creeds of Christendom essentially agree as to the direct and positive method by which this end is reached. It is necessary to consider what the natural condition of man is before it can be concluded that a certain remedial agency shall be applied to him. It is one of the indirect results of tracing the law of development in the animal world that the process by which the present maturity of man has been reached has come to be considered as a natural process. Man is not the result of a cataclysm, but the outgrowth of conditions which reach far beyond the primitive history of the race and have to do with the mystery of the origin

of life. The story of the fall of man as told in the Book of Genesis is the Hebrew explanation of the origin of man and the change that came over our first parents. The story of the origin of man and the record of his struggle as the survival of the fittest is not so much a contradiction of the Hebrew record as it is its statement in the facts of nature. The fact of the evil that is in the world is as distinctly revealed in the processes of development as in the cosmogony of Genesis. One condition supersedes another in the natural world, and one condition supersedes another in the spiritual world. The names are different, but the essential fact is the same. The church has given the preference to the Hebrew story of the degeneracy of man in his moral life, and has itself been regarded as the actual process of the redemption of mankind from a fallen condition; but it has never denied that its whole process was of a positive character, that it aimed to do for the spiritual nature

of man what Nature has aimed to do for the consummate end of the creation of the world, — the building up of that nature so that its higher life shall correspond to the process by which man himself is believed to have sprung into his present existence from a humbler and less complicated organism. In the one case, the church regards mankind as in a spiritual degradation, from which its work is to raise the race; in the other, mankind is regarded in its totality as subject to the developing process always at work in human history and specially realized in the coming of the Son of God into the world. The individual man may be approached with truth and righteousness from either point of view. He is a sinner to be redeemed by the death of Christ; or he is a child of God by natural process, who is to be educated to enter into all that God has made him capable of being and knowing. In fact, he is both. There is no need of changing the traditional theology in order to accommodate

it the better to the stubborn facts of scientific truth. Each is to have fair play ; each is to be regarded as valid in its own sphere. Theology uses one language ; science uses another ; but both are processes ordained of God for the correction and upbuilding of mankind. The essential thing is that neither shall stray away from the plain facts which concern the spiritual renewal of life.

The church takes the individual man in the state in life in which he is, and proposes to place him in the condition of spiritual existence in which he ought to be. The church is the Father's home in this world for the spiritual education of mankind. Our Lord described its functions when he said of it, under the character of the Holy Spirit who is its life-giving power, that the " Comforter, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment : of sin because they believe not on me ; of righteousness because I go to the Father and

ye behold me no more ; of judgment because the prince of this world is judged." Here the central fact in the spiritual world is the fact of the Incarnation of Christ, who is in this world to deal as God with the individual soul ; here the central purpose is the reaching of personal righteousness, as the result of this Incarnation, through the spiritual forces which are left in the world to assist this process ; here the Spirit of God is the witness through personal character that the Christian family is not identified with the prince of this world. The promise that the Christian Church shall be the collective embodiment of the truth which God has vouchsafed for the moral and spiritual control of mankind has not been broken. Whatever Christianity may be, here or there, it is as a whole the supreme agency by which the powers of evil are overcome and mankind are placed in the way of the renewal of spiritual life. It works by a spiritual process, but it is a spiritual process realized in civil society.

The Incarnation of Christ is the fact on which the church rests, and it is by virtue of his life and work, and death and resurrection and ascension, that the church has become the authorized representative of Christ to mankind. It is charged with nothing less than the practical regeneration of the world. This regeneration, if man is a sinful being, with his will predisposed to sinful inclinations, must be first of all a spiritual renewal of the forces of life. Man has always heard the voice of his soul crying out for God, who seemed afar off; but in Jesus Christ God was in man reconciling man to God by a double process — by a representative man who bore in his own body our sins upon the cross, and by a spiritual Person who illustrated in himself the renewal of the human soul through the presence in it of divine power. It is difficult to express this communication of life and power through Jesus Christ to the soul of man, because it is a spiritual

process acting through natural channels. One is convinced of the spiritual reality only as he has himself an insight into what constitutes a spiritual process. There are two factors in the relation which an individual assumes on uniting himself to Jesus Christ, or in becoming a member of the Church of Christ through the act of baptism. One is the presence of God in Christ, promising the remission of actual sin, the guidance into truth, and the power to do God's will and keep his commandments, which presence is indicated in the words and acts of the person who is baptizing; the other is the person coming of his own free act to surrender his life, so far as he has control of it, into the hands of God, to be his child forever, and asking for the help of the Holy Spirit that this vow of obedience may be registered in heaven. There is no spiritual act that goes so thoroughly to the depths of the human consciousness and searches so truly the hidden things

of the heart as the coming to baptism in one's years of full responsibility and surrendering the whole nature to the rule of the spiritual powers which Christ has promised as the strength of God for the renewed soul. The things of this world may again crowd down this new life into a small part of one's existence, but nothing can ever conceal the moral grandeur of the surrender of the soul to God or of its renewal through the contact with Jesus Christ, who is to us in this solemn act individually all that he was in the act of his Incarnation to the whole of mankind. It may seem that the baptism of a little child removes this consciousness of self-surrender; but the smile that used to play on the lips of the sainted Keble when he took the children of his parish in his arms and consecrated them to Christ to be his forever, was the conscious feeling that they were placed within the church, where they would find that what the natural mother was in the family the church would

prove to be as a spiritual mother in their ethical and religious education. Ethical and spiritual guidance and protection are here provided for. The time for self-surrender has not come; it cannot come till years of discretion are reached; but it is an immense gain for the character that one has been given to Christ in his infancy and has been brought up through the perils of youth according to that beginning. It means an education in the world but not according to its spirit. If there is any reality in spiritual things, it further means that spiritual assistance is given to the youth to coöperate with the instructions of a Christian family in the formation of a right character.

This is the normal way of proceeding; it is the method by which human society is gradually transformed by right training of the individual into Christian society. It brings the fruits of the Incarnation of Christ into intimate and personal contact with each individual soul. This is the method which

the teachings of Christ sanction for the regeneration of society, for the realization of the Kingdom of God among men. It is the practical attempt to overcome evil in our nature by the operation of divine grace from the beginning of life. It is the control of our nature by a double process which never ceases until our work in this world is over. It is, on the one hand, an extension of the power of the Incarnation into our daily existence; it is, on the other hand, the rallying of all our strictly human and natural forces to coöperate with the Holy Spirit working within us. The Eucharist, which is the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual presence of Christ in the soul, is the realization of the Incarnation through material forms, and marks our faith in him and our inward resting upon him. It is one of the methods of spiritual renewal in our daily warfare with the world. It is the visible act by which Christians also acknowledge their remembrance of what he has done

for them. It is through the Eucharist that the pledge of spiritual renewal in baptism is reaffirmed by ever fresh repentance of sin and by ever renewed devotion to the discharge of Christian duty.

From this point of view it is seen that the method of the church with reference to the individual is to place him where he is the recipient of divine grace within himself and the subject of spiritual environment from without. The Christian Church is a world within the world, and is yet designed to enfold the world in the final conquest of evil within itself. Its results are not equal to its aims, but it is ever aiming to redeem mankind by a spiritual method applied to universal human life. The sacraments mean more or less to individuals as they read more or less into the words of our Lord concerning their institution; but taken in their universal acceptance among Christian people, they imply the communication of divine grace to the soul of the individual

and the pledge of the one who receives them to a consecrated life. This is the simplest statement possible of what is intended by membership in the Church of Christ. Spiritual development is realized very imperfectly when only the sacramental relation is acknowledged, when the possibilities of character and personal usefulness are not considered. Grace for right action comes from God, but power realized in action is the fruit of the will subdued to "the obedience of Christ." The principle of association enters largely into the application of the spiritual method to actual life. The Kingdom of God is not a company of anchorites established to perfect their own souls by excluding themselves from contact with their fellow-men. It is a social environment of the individual so that each one is related to another and is strengthened and supported by his association with others. It is also more than this. It is the development of character and purpose and usefulness in in-

dividuals, so that they not only see life from a spiritual point of view, but feel its responsibilities in relations to others. The Kingdom of God does not exist simply for the individual perfection of its members. It is a spiritual brotherhood charged with the responsibility of the regeneration of human society. The commission of our Lord to the Apostles was to go into the whole world and make the fact and the power of the Incarnation known to every person. His parables taught what the church was to be in its relations with civil society. It was as leaven, as the seed growing secretly, as the mustard-seed in its powers of expansion, as the shepherd seeking the lost sheep. It had a mission which was not only given to the Apostles and to their successors, but to the royal priesthood of the laity who constitute the household of faith. The mission was the conquest of the world, and this was not more to win men to the following of Christ in their personal obedience to

his teachings than in the consecration of their sanctified intelligence to the making of society Christian in its atmosphere where they lived.

It is here that the spiritual method has been most imperfectly expressed. The weakness of human nature has always prevented the realization of an ideal church, and yet it is in the contact with society that the conquests of Christianity have been made in the past and are to be made in the future. It is the realization of the individual that he is endowed with influence over his fellows, and that by word and deed he can transmute that influence into changes in their character and in their personal motives, which is the final development of the Christian to his full powers of activity in the sphere in which God has placed him. It is the carrying of divine strength in personal character which has had most influence upon others; and it is by this method of contact with others, who see by the marks in one of their fellow-men

that he has been with Christ, that the spiritual touch is conveyed from man to man in the open field of the world. It is well to regard the church in the aggregate as a divine institution, but its human strength comes from the development of Christian power in the minds and hearts of its members. Its action upon society, whether in the home, in the circle of friends, or in the sphere of public life, is what each one expresses to his fellow of the divine ideal. There is nothing short of personal consecration of mind and heart daily to God, and the living with strong leaning upon the arm of divine help, to keep one in the full realization of what the Christian life is in its essence, and to enable one to manifest it to his fellow-men. The sacraments are the outward and visible pledge of the secret aid that one needs, but the daily sacrament of personal communion with God in the chamber of the soul is not to be neglected. Here one is fed as with bread from heaven, according

to his need. One who has carried spiritual method to this point in his inward experience may not live a perfect life, but as often as he falls he has the power to rise above his weakness and acknowledge amid greater efforts after holiness his need of increased help from God. The great thing is to keep the mind and heart intent upon spiritual development through the right use of the opportunities of life. God does not expect great things of any one.

We need not bid, for cloister'd cell,
Our neighbor and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky :

The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask ;
Room to deny ourselves ; a road
To bring us daily nearer God.¹

The saints have been usually those who found their way to sainthood along the

¹ Keble's hymn, entitled "Morning," in *The Christian Year*.

path of daily duty. The final result of spiritual method, so far as one's usefulness is concerned, is to affiliate with the interests of ordinary life and make them the environment or agencies in forming one's Christian character. It is here that our personality becomes invested with the message that has most weight with our fellow-men. There is a call to-day for Christian character in industrial and social life which can hardly ever have been more imperative. The church stands to-day, as it did in the primitive days, before a population which feels the need of the patience and hopefulness that Christianity imparts to a broken industrial and social situation, and which longs to see the vindication of principles that spring out of the realization of human brotherhood in the natural intercourse of life. It is out of the convictions which men, touched with the spirit of Christ, carry into their intercourse with their fellows that an adjustment of industrial troubles is to be reached in which

justice and righteousness are the ruling factors. It is here that the church meets the world and imparts to men, through the personal convictions of its members, the principles which cause peace and good will to take the place of strife and injustice. It is here that the spiritual method of regenerated society begins to rule the world.





CHAPTER VIII.

The Church in the Family.

ONE of the distinctions between ancient and modern life is that formerly the family was mainly under the control of the state and the church, while at the present day the family is removed from the direct oversight of both and is allowed to develop in freedom. The day of absolutism in church and state has passed away. The family is removed from their restrictions, and yet with the increase of its freedom of movement it has not better supported the other interests of society. It is a part of a great whole in which the state and the church are, like itself, representative institutions. The special characteristic of the family to-day is that it is an organic part of civil life. The giving of freedom to the individual, since the Refor-

mation, has helped to restore its primitive character. The principle of English law, that a man's home is his castle, that the father is the head of the household and has both the right of control and the responsibility for action in his own family, is everywhere recognized to-day. The state interferes with the family as little as possible ; the church as an institution respects the independence and the integrity of family life. It is expected that the household will not only be a paternal institution, but will prepare its younger members for the duties of both religious and civil society. The ideal of the home contains both the institutional and the democratic idea. The home to-day in its wholeness is the unit of society, and the preservation of its wholeness of operation, of its demand for obedience from its younger members, of the freedom of relation between its several units, of its security and its openness, is perhaps even more essential than when its operation was confined within a more limited

range of influence. You cannot watch the operation of one family upon another, as they combine to make society, without feeling the larger significance of the family to-day than before the rise of modern life. The growth of civil society has been the enfranchisement of the individual, but the excessive demands of individual liberty have threatened to destroy the integrity of the family relation. The history of social life, since the Reformation, has been negatively the record of demands upon the rights of the family. The natural instincts which have preserved it as an institution have alone been able to maintain it as a social unit. In a free government, where the democratic idea prevails alike in church and state, the family has felt the encroachment of the demand for personal freedom. Not only have men and women in the marriage relation stood up for personal rights against the concessions of the marriage contract, but the individual head of the family has been counted, instead of the

whole family itself, as the social unit. We have forgotten what our laws imply in our desire to make the most of the individual man. The very play of this individual force has encouraged divorce and has stimulated independence between husband and wife, between children and parents, to a degree which has materially assailed the integrity of the home. While it has been more and more conceded and recognized that the family is the fundamental institution of society, the forces leading to its desecration have to a great extent silently undermined its vitality. The constructive view of the family and of its positive contribution to social order begins at last to be more definitely insisted upon. It has been felt that an element has been lost out of organic social life, and the restoration of the family to the place which it once held in ancient society, and which it largely lost when church and state limited its action, has perhaps a larger place in present thought than at any time since the modern period in history began.

In European countries, where marriage is largely controlled by tradition, and where freedom of choice between man and woman is restricted, the family has held its ancient place, and its integrity has been less disturbed than in a democratic country like our own. In a free community the civil aspect of marriage has the lead of its religious character. Without a national marriage law it has been possible to undo in one State what has been done in another, and the result has been in recent years that the family has been more corrupted and debased than perhaps any other institution that has to do with the vital functions of society. The demoralization of the American people to-day is largely due to the implication, allowed by freedom of divorce, that a marriage is to be enforced only to the extent of the wishes of the contracting parties. The root and germ of the marriage relation is a contract for life entered into soberly, advisedly, discreetly, and in the fear of God, and few

and far between must be the reasons that would sanction a separation. The church has been truer to the integrity of the marriage contract than the state ; and yet the state has quite as much at stake as the church in the disintegration of the family, and in the breaking up of society which that disintegration implies. The care of children, the division of property, the ties of blood which are thicker than water, are imperiled by the consent of father and mother to live apart, and even the moral character of persons thus separated is enfeebled. It is here that church and state have been robbed in recent times, especially in our own country, of the support which they naturally derive from the social, educational, and moral growths which have their root in the family.

The question before the American people is, how the family may be reinforced in its constructive elements ; and its answer lies in the outreach of the family alike to the state and to the church. It is

best to consider each of these in its order, so that there may be no confusion of treatment. The state, at this time, will be considered in that relation to the family which is closest to the relation of the church to the same. The state demands that its citizens, composed of individuals either in families or in a position of organized family life, shall be prepared to discharge the duties of citizenship. The public-school system represents the desire of the state to assume that fatherhood of the family which is the preparation of the individual man for civil life. Here the youth of the country are placed "where any person can find instruction in any study."¹ This is the largest statement of the sphere of public instruction. It is a statement which is in process of realization on a larger scale in this country than has before been attempted in the history of the world. The free public school is the necessary support of democratic ideas. What the

¹ Ezra Cornell's outline idea of Cornell University.

state assumes, then, in public instruction is to mediate between the family and civil society, and to prepare the members of the one to discharge their duties in relation to the other. This view of the public school is inclusive, and it is the only view which can be wholly consistent in a country like our own. The public school cannot be narrowed to functions that are less inclusive than all that goes to make a good citizen. It is supposed that the heads of a family are competent for the position of teachers in which they stand toward their children ; but the state, in its larger view of parenthood, recognizes the duty of complementing the home education with the wider instruction which fits one to earn his own living and to occupy positions of trust as a citizen. Our American political system grows out of the free life of the American town, and the American town is the result of families living in freedom, whose children are trained in the common schools. If

the local church in this country should ever be again what it was in the primitive days, coextensive with the political community, so that without interfering with one another the state and the church should be complementary or rather co-inclusive in their relation to human life, the ideal product of citizenship would be reached as it has not been reached elsewhere. We have the elements here that lead directly to the highest organization of human society, and it is their proper realization and adjustment that may be called the social and religious problem of the future. To this end all our present thought upon society and religion converges.

The school question in this country is thus fundamental in its operation. It is so vital to our interests that it is difficult to consider it dispassionately. Our religious conceptions lag so far behind our political beliefs that comparatively few citizens are willing to consider the school question in its higher and moral, if not

spiritual, relations. The fear that the church will repeat in America the absolutism that has characterized it for fifteen hundred years, is our bugbear. The determination that religion shall be taught in a sectarian sense is largely the ruling thought in different denominations. The willingness to consider this question with the breadth and the wisdom that regard society as a whole is largely wanting. The spirit of each denomination is to seek its own advantage, and not to think and act for the whole of society. When it is remembered that the sum total of Christian membership in this country, or perhaps better, the sum total of active Christians among us, does not include more than perhaps one half of our whole population, and that the families and the children beyond Christian influence are largely dependent upon the public schools for whatever fills out the defects of the home and builds up boys and girls into well-instructed men and women, the ne-

cessity of moral, if not spiritual, agreement concerning the teachings in the schools that affect character is seen in its right light. We cannot afford, as a people, in reaching a good system of public education, to put personal preferences in place of what is best for the whole of society, and the danger to-day is that one religious body, seeking its own advantage, shall withdraw its moral and spiritual strength from the support of methods which will secure the greatest good to the largest number. It is the seriousness and the imperativeness of the outlook upon American citizenship which impel every honest man and good citizen to disinterested action in this matter. The feeling is deep and strong everywhere that the instruction given in the public schools should be reinforced with the moral sanctions which are insisted upon in common life. The question of the authority of morals is partly speculative. They may be derived from the will of God, as expressed in what is supposed to

be his revelation to man, but they are also expressed in the accumulations of human experience which are hardly less than the will of God written out in the universal principles of human conduct. The one may be called the divine sanction and the other the natural sanction, but practically they harmonize and are one in their result. We accept them and act upon them, and the sooner our practical agreements upon moral instruction which has this basis are allowed or enforced in the public schools, the better will it be for our youth who are in them. To-day, notwithstanding the changes in methods of instruction by which our schools are brought into contact with the things of actual life, there is no feature of their work which can be more strongly indorsed than the moral strength which men, and especially women, devoted to teaching, impart by practical methods to their pupils. The moral and religious influence which is conveyed almost unconsciously in the

natural process of instruction cannot be over-estimated, and it is in the encouragement given to teachers of high character, and in the freedom of method allowed to them, that the results most important to the family and to American citizenship are to be reached. When this vital working of moral and spiritual truth has free play in a school-room, where every boy and girl enjoys the constant attrition of life with life and of race with race, the lines for the building up of the best citizenship may be said to be laid. It is here that public education grapples with the real issues of American life. The family is complemented by the primary school which enlarges its work. The primary school leads the boy or the girl of ripening intelligence, still moving in the atmosphere of home, to the recognition of the meaning of life outside of it. The grammar school is the introduction of three-fourths of our youth to practical life, and unless the principles which enter into

the construction of character are made a part of the preparation for taking hold of practical things, the kindred points of heaven and home are not established in young life, and something is wanting in public education which is indispensable to public virtue. The demand is that education shall be intellectual, industrial, and seasoned with character. General Wolsley admits that the man who brings intelligence and conscience to his work makes the best soldier and the truest patriot ; and principles which lead men to give their best to defend a country are the principles most needed in fitting them to live in it. In this outreach from the family and the state to education which has a moral basis, may be traced the development of the family into a leading factor in civil society, and it is in keeping the state true to its moral duties, without enlisting its aid in specific religious action, that public education maintains its greatest usefulness. There is no reason why education thus

managed should not meet and satisfy the rightful demands of religious people. For the purpose which we have in mind as a nation, for the building up of men and women who shall rise to the full demands that can be laid upon them, the public education that is true to the teachings of heaven and of home is the education which every American citizen requires. Departures from this line of action are departures from what is good for the whole of civil society.

What may the church do to develop and renew the higher life of the family? The church approaches the family in two directions. It deals with its head and with its members as individuals, and it recognizes the institution in its social unity. If the parents are members of the Christian Church by baptism, they represent the twofold institutional relationship. They have duties as individuals in the Christian body, and they stand in a sacred and self-respecting relation to the home as

an independent institution. The family in its fullness means children and children's children to the third and fourth generation, and it is thus that it becomes an organic contribution to society, entering into affiliations with church and state and supporting both. What the state does for its political life the church does for its social and spiritual life. It reaches out to the family as a corporate unit, and it is in and through this institution that its influence is most successfully exerted and its best work done. In the Christian family children are baptized into the life of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and are thus members of the body of Christ, to be educated according to their baptismal vows. Thus far the Christian family and the Christian Church have a unity of purpose, and the one finds its sphere in the other. The Christian families brought together represent the body of Christ in a given locality, and it is their united action upon society which is

called the Christian movement in the community. They are the light of the world, examples to others, illustrations of the higher type of family and of social life. It was in the early church, as it is in the modern church, the influence of these families, working out Christian principles, which imparted strength to civil relationships.

The duties of the church as a teaching institution to Christian families are not well understood. Every pastor seeks first of all to watch over the members of his spiritual household, their families and their little ones. But the difficulty in the working of the church to-day is not so much in the care of the members of its own household, as in its lack of extensive and intensive influence upon the large portion of society which is beyond its immediate care, and which is to be reached not only through the individual, but largely and organically through the better use of the family. The first thought among Protes-

tant people has been the work upon the individual. Too little consideration has been given to the place of the family in the reconstruction of society. Our religious bodies, divided by imaginary or real differences, have emphasized their differences in social action. They have been prevented, by following out the sectarian idea, from working as they might for the good of the community as a whole. They have believed that the regeneration of the individual man would be sufficient, in a constructive way, for the good of society. The stress laid upon conversion has been greater than the stress laid upon Christian education and upon a large view of the relation of the family to practical life, so that the ideas of household training have been too little inculcated, at least in this generation. The Sunday schools have led to the ignoring of religious instruction in the family, and the Christian family has suffered because its regular functions have fallen into disuse. People upon

whom moral and spiritual responsibilities fall lightly have insisted that their children should be instructed in duties which they are unwilling to perform themselves, and the contradiction between the influence of the home and the teaching of the Sunday school is a break in the religious order which has been largely fatal to the building up of religious character. If the efforts of the Christian ministry had been directed in the last generation as earnestly toward the Christian development of the family as they have been aimed toward bringing the children of non-Christian families into the Christian Church, the tone of whole American communities would be different from what it is to-day.

To a very great extent the idea of the wholeness of the family has dropped out of the working Christian system. It is not common to hear Sunday instruction about the family. The social duty and the personal duty is insisted upon, but the place of the family in the social

order, the duty of parents to their children, the way in which character is transmitted from father to son and from mother to daughter, the insistence upon the sacredness and purity of family life, are ignored alike in the pulpit, in household visitation, and in the literature of the day. The family has not been treated as an institution, and the church has too often ignored its functions as a social and spiritual force in the community. It has been treated as a concourse of individual units, and the value of a congregation of families for breathing a spiritual purpose into the whole of human life has not been appreciated. The reviving of the church itself as an institution, and the consideration of what it may do to increase the efficiency of the family as an organic factor in society, and the looking at individuals more in their relation to institutional work, will put a new face upon the community. The family is the key alike to society and to the individual. Unless the corporate

ideas of life are reintroduced, individuals are in relation to one another as grains of sand. They lack coherence, constructive influence, and associated power.

The neglected field of the church in society is in its failure to treat people outside of the church from the family point of view. The individual conversion is not less to be sought for, but the individual Christian should be better educated to discharge his duties as a member of society, and especially as one who may organize and guide society through the family. His higher education as a Christian citizen, as one in organic relations with the social order, should also not be neglected. It is in overlooking this kind of education that the teachers in our churches have cut short their own influence. The state values the citizen in proportion to his contribution to the social forces; the church should value the individual, not so much as counting one in its membership, as for his power to organize society through the

family upon a Christian basis. Every man and woman represents the possibility of organizing society through the family and of being able to guide and direct the life of the next generation. The higher life of the community depends upon the education of each individual in the organic relation of the family to society and upon his personal influence in maintaining it. We have so far drifted away from this conception of the church in its relation to the family life outside of its membership that a large part of the community is treated, from the Christian point of view, at arm's length. The word is not spoken, and the influence is not exerted, where it does the most good. Families are organized, their younger members reach maturity, and new families are organized outside of the existing churches, where for two or three generations, if not more, hardly any influences of the Christian Church are brought to bear upon the family idea. The moral and spiritual responsibility of the parent

for the children is not recognized, and the teaching which the church should bring to the household does not exist. Whatever, in such a case, may be done for an individual member of the family, its higher corporate life is neither aroused nor directed. You may go through community after community, through hamlet and village and town and city, and the absence of the impact of the church in its organic strength upon families is so characteristic as to be almost universal. How can religious societies flourish when neglecting the direction of an institution which is fundamental to their existence? How can the grip of the Christian minister be felt in a community, when he does not seek to lead, through the family, its organic life? How can the young, who look to parents for the teaching word of power and guidance, be restrained from evil influences and made to respect Christian organization, when the clergy, who should naturally guide life, do not work through the family? The

inefficiency here pointed out is due very largely to a radical defect in the interpretation of the duty of the church itself. It grows out of the undue stress that is laid upon the conversion of the individual and the undue disregard of the constructive relation in which the church stands to the family and to the community. Until the church puts its strength into a broader conception of its legitimate functions in the family, until it takes as wide a view of the family for a religious purpose as the state takes of it for a political purpose, its influence will be like the work of a man with one hand, with the other unused, or paralyzed, at his side.





CHAPTER IX.

The Church among the People.

A NOTE of the church is its universality. It adjusts itself to all social conditions, and every one has standing room within its limits. It is as comprehensive in its scope as the whole of mankind, and though it has never yet ruled the social world, there is nothing in its character to prevent this conquest. The principles upon which the church rests, in its relation to society, are the principles which our Lord, as the leader of humanity, laid down for the conduct of his disciples. These are not in opposition to the natural principles which have grown up among men in the form of mutual concessions for the common weal; they recognize all natural rights and insist upon lifting them up to the ideal excellence of universal

righteousness. The teachings of the Christian Church have constructed for mankind a social order which is as yet imperfectly realized in the world, but is in constant process of becoming universal. This ideal standard of order, embodied in the church as a living principle, has been its great distinction as a social institution throughout its entire history. In the earlier Christian ages the social life of the people was controlled by the church against the corruption of the Greek and Roman world; at a later time the same social order in the Middle Ages gave tone and character to civilization; just before the Reformation the church stood up as the defender of the individual against the nations of the earth; at the Reformation itself the Protestant part of the church allied itself with political institutions in order that the rights of the individual might be more distinctly maintained in free society; and even in the Roman Church of those days the great

Christian brotherhoods and sisterhoods retained under limitations the principles which had been transmitted from the beginning and had given the church the power to control the social world.

The Christian Church has never been without influence in society; indeed, here have been the sources of its power. Its contact with society, as well as its control of it, has been a varying element, though it is here that its human strength has been concentrated. But since the Reformation there has been a separation between things secular and things sacred, so that the church, with more apparent freedom than before, has seemed to separate itself from society instead of controlling it, and to reach serenity of spirit at the expense of its usefulness as a social factor. Dogma has been exalted above charity, and a correct belief has been more insisted on than a saintly life. Civil society, even within our own time, has enlarged its sphere; there are opportuni-

ties to do more things to-day than there were yesterday, and human affairs are constantly becoming more and more complex. In the meanwhile, what are called the American churches have been increasingly specialized away from what is the central function of the Catholic Church, which is to make this institution coextensive with the whole of human life, and comprehensive enough to include all sorts and conditions of men. This specialization of functions is the glory of the undivided church, but the bane of a section of it. The difficulty with the American working church is that it enlarges its special work at the expense of its central functions; it draws the blood away from the heart and does not return it there to receive new life. The constant criticism of our American Christianity is that in its special forms it is neither broad nor strong enough to do the social work which it undertakes. Its several branches do not control the social world

or direct social action as the undivided church would. They have neither authority nor influence sufficient for this purpose. What the Christian Church in the United States lacks more than anything else is the ability to carry weight into life. It lacks the consciousness of mission; it is not animated by an overmastering purpose; its authority is not deferred to in the social world; in but few instances is there a large and wise outreach to the central things in social life, or such a wise shaping of the influences which direct the lives of men that the collective church inspires them with a consciousness of its mission and with reverence for its teachings, if not obedience to them. The Christian Church among the people of America lacks prestige; it needs distinction, emphasis, the touch of divine grace, the word from God. It is in the world, but not of the world, while its mission is to subdue the world to itself.

The church is not here so much at fault as are the methods by which the organizations of to-day are brought into contact, or rather kept from adequate contact, with social life. • Light is thrown upon this point by the contrast between the church and the state in the way in which they influence society. The state is at once permissive and restrictive in its action. It allows certain things to be done, and it forbids others. It treats the whole body politic as citizens. No one within the nation can escape from its control or break its laws with impunity. The church, if it were coextensive with the nation and united in its action, would exert the same influence over the spiritual life which the state exerts over the political and economic life of the people. What the state insists on as morals the church insists upon as religion. The drawback is that the church, in its dis-united sections, lacks the power over society which is exerted by the state.

There is no system of temporal rewards and punishments behind it. It is simply a voluntary agency. Its ban of excommunication means nothing. It comes into society as a free, inspiring, and universal influence. It can secure only a voluntary obedience to its principles of right and wrong. It reaches the people mainly on their emotional and moral side, and it is as a moral agency that it carries weight into social life. To individuals it offers a way of personal salvation; to society it offers a changed environment. There are many theories of social rights, but the position of the church in society does not square with any theory whatsoever. It is broader than any theory allows. It looks upon society as a whole; it refers special actions to the central principles set forth in the teachings of Christ; and it is also entirely non-partisan in its action. This conception of the church is higher and broader than our common experience of its action in the

communities with which we are acquainted, but it is no higher or broader than what is required, if it takes its place as an institution which bears directly and constructively upon the whole of human life. Where it has this large significance as an institution, its influence is felt at once in carrying out a higher principle of action. Here it may take the side of the rich ; there it is on the side of the poor ; again it may mediate between the two and show the common ground that belongs to both ; at another time its task is to lead the whole community to a new standard of life ; it can have no one unvarying sense, no uniform policy, no universal rule of action ; it must conform itself everywhere to the circumstances which modify the action of a universal principle. The position of justice and righteousness here embodied in what men call the church gives it an influence over the people which comes home to the aspirations and longings of every right-minded man ; and

it is as an institution in the social world that its claims find glad recognition. This or that local section may imperfectly show what the universal church would do, but when we regard it as impersonating the interests of human society, and allow it to work freely for the protection and growth of individual rights, its authority and influence everywhere command respect.

The church thus active in society becomes naturally the representative of moral authority in social, educational, and industrial questions. Its authority is not absolute, but it represents that sense of justice and rightness which is latent in the minds and hearts of all men. Perhaps at no previous time has there been a stronger demand for the insistence upon the ideal order which the church would like to establish for the perfecting of the community. The distinctive feature of our own time is that every political, economic, or industrial question rises dis-

tinctly and inevitably into a moral question. No man lives unto himself alone; no movement in society is without its bearing upon the whole of human thought and action; no questions which divide the industrial world can be justly and fairly settled without carrying men in their final solution up to the plane of Christian principle; even political contentions, always partisan in their inception and development, rise inevitably into great moral issues; and the relations of capital and labor, whenever seriously discussed, find their solution in the overpowering moral principles which soften the asperities and remove the misunderstandings between the two factors. In the days that are upon us, and in those which are to come, the Christian Church occupies socially a unique position. The opportunity of the church through its clergy and through the living up to its principles is to tell the capitalist not less than the laboring man what he ought to do, and

to bring the two parties to see the situation from a more central point of view. Without committing itself to either party and without acting as umpire between the two, it has been possible, wherever the Christian Church has been in healthy and responsive relations to the community, to work successfully for the settlement of industrial disputes. It is here that the Christian Church represents the spiritual guidance of social life; it is here that it recognizes and maintains the position in the community where the assertion of its functions gives it directing power among the people. Where it is sold out to a class, where a parish represents people chiefly of one kind, where local prejudice is allowed to give color to a congregation, this influence and authority are not manifested. The severest thing that can be said against local congregations in all parts of the collective American church is that they are too often under the control of men and women who are without

sympathy with those who are engaged in a life of daily toil. This is not the fault of the church ; it is the fault of the people who for the time being give particular parishes their local tone and color. All that is needed in any of these cases is to secure different leadership and change the spirit of a particular congregation.

The Christian Church gains in respect and in usefulness in proportion as it becomes to society at large what it is personally to the individual in the direction of his inward life. It reaches society by entering into it and organizing its working ideas. This is accomplished, not by denouncing its errors so much as by putting the salt of a new life into its springs of power, and creating everywhere the conviction that the church is on the helping side of every man who tries to live up to the best that is in him. When we treat the spiritual method of the church, we confess to the coöperation of the divine will with the human will in the

making of a new man in Jesus Christ; when we treat of the regeneration of society and the method by which this is accomplished, it is understood that moral elements not less than spiritual forces enter into the environment of the community and constitute its atmosphere, so that its average tone is raised and men feel it as they drink in the inspiration of the air on a June morning. It makes little difference whether one form of ecclesiastical polity or another is followed in bringing the church into contact with the people. In a country like our own the polity in closest harmony with democratic institutions has the advantage, while that which represents the principle of hereditary descent or spiritual succession is often felt to be out of touch with the masses; but what one polity gains in the sympathy of a common method is supplied by the other in treating the whole question of religion with the breadth and simplicity which gather up and sanctify all that is

best in life. Both are alike in their recognition of a common work among the people, which must be controlled by an abounding love for the souls of men, and by such an interest in their personal happiness in this world that every possible effort is put forth to make it suitable for them to live in. In practical experience, both the monarchical and the democratic church succeed because each recognizes in its own way the spiritual needs of the people and meets them with the wisdom and sympathy that Christ has taught them to use. There are advantages in each form of polity ; and were the advantages of each one used to make up the deficiencies in the other, the power and efficiency of the working church in modern life would be immensely increased.

Wherever the masses do not attend church, the question is whether the church itself is in a condition to invite them or to take care of them if they came. Our Lord said: "If I be lifted up from the

earth I will draw all men unto me." This promise is always realized when the infinite beauty and attraction of his life and death, and the inspiring power which he imparts to our own lives, are fairly and truly presented to mankind. The question of most importance to-day is not whether the people are in this or that religious body, but whether our churches, individually or collectively, are so thoroughly controlled by the spirit of the Master that the people who are hungering and thirsting for the bread of life can be truly fed by resorting to them. Until a great reform has been wrought in the present relations of the church to society, until the thought of Christian leaders has been greatly widened and their methods admit of greater diversity in practical work, until the largeness and freedom of the whole church are applied to the administration of special sections of it, the people themselves will not find in the sections that specially appeal to them the divine teach-

ing which calls them instinctively to the Master's service. The bringing of the people to the church is very largely accomplished when the church is prepared to receive them, when its doors are opened, when it reaches out the helping hand, when it asks people low down in life to come up higher, when it stands in the community for making more of people than they were before. The reaching of all sorts and conditions of men is largely a question of method, of adaptation, and of sympathy. In one respect the method of the Protestant churches has improved. The damnatory motives once insisted upon in order to lead people to righteousness of life are now seldom urged. The Christian method, the positive method, the method that increases the meaning of life, the method that strengthens the will to live rightly, begins to be employed, where Christians are thoroughly in earnest, with wonderful efficiency and power. The church itself, when truly understood, is

as broad in its spirit as the social life of the whole community, and its methods of dealing with individuals should be as flexible as the differences of temperament demand. A great result has been accomplished when the impression has been created in a neighborhood that the religious organization which appeals to the people is in helpful sympathy with their needs and conditions. When men and women feel that it covers the whole of their life and treats it in such a way as to make it a new life, so that they are inspired by a broader, freer, truer spirit in their homes, among their friends, and in their social experiences, the life of Christ has been renewed in them. The aim of the Christian Church should be not only to renew and spiritualize individual and family life, but to make the whole of society as nearly as possible the reflection of this sort of life. It is by such a method that Christianity makes the life of men larger, leads them into a

riper Christian experience, unites one class with another by the extension of a kindly spirit among them until each one's life becomes more interesting to himself and more attractive to others, and persons who have had slight opportunity to make much of themselves find that their whole contact with the world is purer, fresher, and better than it was before. Where these conditions are established, the community not less than the family and the individual is inspired with a new purpose, and Christianity becomes lovely in the eyes of all men. Into details of method in reaching the people it is perhaps not best to go. The points of successful Christian work may be considered under the heads of worship, sympathy, opportunity, and reality ; but in each locality or community the treatment is so special, even under these suggestions, that it could not be successfully treated without making a treatise on pastoral theology. The work of the Christian leader to-day is very largely in the removal of

misunderstanding as to the social position of all the churches. The line of separation which has been allowed in this country to mark off church-members from their friends in the world needs to be taken out of social life ; the patronage which ministers and people often extend toward those who are lower down in life needs to be replaced by the appeal to what is best in all men ; the church ought to be presented not so much as passing judgment upon men's sins as offering a method by which they may escape from them and rise above them ; and Dr. Arnold's principle in governing Rugby School, which was to accept every boy on his best side and for the best that was in him, should be the rule rigidly adhered to by all who hold commissions for helping and keeping the souls of their fellow-men. The spiritual lines which seem to divide people into sheep and goats are not so distinct when we go down into the realities of life as they seem to be when they are laid

down by religious doctrinaires ; and when Christian leaders or teachers go forth among men to arouse in them an attraction for the life which they are capable of leading, they are not often allowed to return from their seed-sowing without bringing the sheaves of the harvest with them.





CHAPTER X.

The Church in the Nation.

THE nation organizes the life of man for civil authority. It is "the sphere of a realized freedom, in which alone the life of man fulfills itself, and it is to give expression to all that is compassed in life. It moves toward the development of a perfect humanity. Its symbol is the city of an hundred gates, through which there passes not only the course of industry and trade, but the forms of poets and prophets and soldiers and sailors and scholars—man and woman and child in the unbroken procession of the people. Its warrior bears the shield of Achilles, on which there are not only the figures of the mart and sea and field, the loom and ship and plow, but the houses and the temples

and the shrines and the altars of men, the types of the thought and endeavor and conflict and hope of humanity. The condition of the being of the nation, as the power and the minister of God in history, is in its moral personality; in this it is constituted in history as the moral order of the world, and for the fulfillment of that order. The assertion of the moral being of the nation has been the foundation of that which is enduring in politics, and has been embodied in the political thought and will which alone have been constructive in the state.”¹ The state is to secure justice, maintain order, establish freedom for the individual, furnish scope for social ends, render possible more and more the rule of the people by the people, which means government by mutual consent, and thus represents the nation as the realization of the moral idea in the life of self-conscious freedom, which is the order of the moral world;

¹ *The Nation*, by Elisha Mulford, LL.D., pp. 21, 22.

and this is the working out of the full idea of Hegel, who says: "There is one conception in religion and the state, and that is the highest of man."¹ This comprehensive outline of the province of the nation in the control of civil society has its complement in the way in which the church organizes the whole community as a people of God who are to be treated and cared for not only as members of a moral commonwealth in which they are to be trained for the duties of citizenship, but as inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Thus the twofold relationship of the church to society, its part in building up the state in the moral forces which maintain a high order of citizenship, and its part in establishing the spiritual republic of God on earth, has always been maintained; but too often it has been realized by the domination of the church over the state or the state over the church. The papal theory which ruled

¹ Hegel's *Philosophie der Religion*, vol. i. p. 170.

the Middle Ages and was maintained unimproved down to the Reformation, was the supremacy of the church over the state. The same theory was the Puritan ideal, as partially carried out during the period of the English commonwealth, and more fully established in Puritan New England. Neither in papal countries nor in Puritan New England has it been possible to realize this theory in modern society ; it did not give to the individual sufficient freedom either as a citizen of the state or as a member of the household of God. The English ideal of the church as coextensive with the nation, as bound up with it so that the one should not act without the consent of the other, is entirely consistent with the development of the church and state in modern life. It is easy to see that when civil society had only begun to enter upon its present development, the English Church, which looked after the life of the whole English people, filled a place in their in-

stitutional history and maintained a spiritual freedom for the individual which was the counterpart of his moral freedom as an English citizen. The religious institutions of the country were rightly coördinate with its political institutions. The point in which their relation differed then from what it is growing to be and has become to-day in a country like our own, is that a legal connection was then maintained which has now been diminished into a relation of mutual consent or friendly understanding. In the different European states where the Roman Catholic is the controlling religion, the same tendency to the mutual release of church and state from obligations to each other is to be noted. Church and state must always be two leading and controlling factors in human society, and it is in their working in mutual freedom that the highest aim of each is to be attained in modern life.

We have reached to-day in the United States that free development of church

and state where each is separated from the other in a practically uniform relation, where each is in non-legal but constant intercourse with the other, where the state deals only with the temporal and the church with the eternal issues. Both have to do with society as a whole ; both confer with men as individuals. This does not mean the establishment of an *imperium in imperio* ; it is simply that the spheres of the two jurisdictions are independent, though often inclusive. The state is free ; the church is free ; and it is understood that there are to be no antagonisms between them. The people in this country would not tolerate a closer relation. What the state does for political society the church does for religious society. It is in the largest possible definition of the national position of the collective church toward the spiritual consciousness of the people that the point of view is reached where the work of the church is seen in a right light as a spiritual factor in the

nation. It has the moral consciousness of the nation in its keeping. The country cannot go wrong upon great moral issues without a protest from the collective church. It cannot fulfill its charge, its duty to the individual, without arousing that enthusiasm for the welfare of the community which is the secret and invisible impulse in the Kingdom of God. The church is the realization, in its continuous life, of the religious belief of the Positivist, that all the accretions of wisdom which go to enlarge the sphere of human government are handed over in succession to each generation, thus increasing the advantages of life in the future. It emphasizes in freedom the spiritual consciousness of the individual and educates it as the personal conscience. The nation is also a moral personality. Dr. Mulford says: "The condition of the realization of personality is the same in the nation as in the individual. This condition in each is the clearness and fullness in which it compre-

hends its purpose and is centred in it. The source of strength is, as in the individual, in working faithfully after the type of its own individuality and in bringing this to its free and clear development. . . . The nation as a moral person is in itself called as a power in the coming of that kingdom in which there is the moral government of the world and in whose conception there is the goal of history.”¹ The nation, like the individual, finds its development in an integral moral life. The church advances *pari passu* on this same line, but after a spiritual method in its dealing with the whole of human society. It is only as we see the collective church from this point of view that the greatness, the dignity, the responsibility, and the moral grandeur of its functions are made to appear.

It detracts from the estimate of what may be called a national church that its divisions, in this country at least, are so

¹ *The Nation*, p. 19.

numerous that it not only presents no collective front, no well-adjusted order of procedure, but is to a great extent a mass of discordant factions warring with one another over distinctions which are beneath its notice and impair its efficiency as a republic of God. Regarded from this point of view, the fragments of organizations that call themselves churches do not unite people and do not build up in them the conception of the Catholic Church in the nation which is here set forth. The disintegration of Christian society through its divisions has previously been discussed. The larger portion of Christian people sincerely lament these separations and note in them a constant waste of spiritual power and strength. The country is overrun with spiritual enthusiasts and with religious rivalries which make sober people sick unto death of even the name of religion, and amid this confusion they look almost in vain for its reality. Needless as these divisions seem

to be, the time has come when conservative people are intolerant of them. It is to be noted that the come-outers in this country from the established and responsible organizations have not only never organized anything to take their place, but have dissipated their spiritual strength in social reforms which, after the best is said of them, are secondary to the power for reform and renewal which the collective church attains. It is further to be noticed that, great as is the tendency to individualism in religion to-day, the only forms of the Christian Church among us maintaining not only the right of way but a strong and steady increase are those which are identified as the historical churches. The great race instinct among the American people may be abused by the licentiousness and prodigality of its individual manifestations, but it is too strong in its conservative movement, and its roots are too deep in the life of society, to trifle always with the

constructive spiritual life of the nation. Though much in our modern Protestantism prevents civil society from being controlled by the large principles that take in the general order of things and work for it as a unit, there is a recognition everywhere, too often imperfect, often enunciated by a minority, perhaps more often heard outside the churches than within them, voiced by religious leaders here and there rather than by the officers of the church organization, but on the whole the audible expression of a conviction which more and more carries weight into life, — that the religion which is worth anything in this country is a religion which aims at the unity of life and deals with the whole of civil society. Nothing short of this is satisfactory. Disappointing as things seem on the surface, whether in the country town with its church-bells clanging for discordant creeds, or in the city with its confused religious dialects, — if the whole aim which is im-

plied in this discordant work is taken into account, — the substantial unity of things may be recognized, and the fragmentariness of our Christian aim may rightly be regarded as a temporary and transient phase. In the better ordering of Christian society the church must again reassert and maintain the principles of unity and order which have been, humanly speaking, the secret of its strength, side by side with the nation, from the beginning of the Christian system.

What does the collective church do for the state? It brings the law of God to bear upon society. The aim of the state finds its end in itself ; it seeks to improve a certain order and hand it down to posterity. The church's aim and end is the restoration of man to God ; it is a constructive purpose ; it does something that legislation cannot do and does not attempt to do. It imparts a higher principle to our present organic life. Illustrations of what the collective church does beyond

what the state does are found in the relation of each to the temperance and the prison reforms. The state punishes the criminal and the drunkard for their overt acts against its laws; the church undertakes a higher and more radical work; it would reform both the drunkard and the criminal by increasing their self-defense against temptations, and would plant the principle of temperance not only in the individual mind and heart but in the consent of society to diminish if not entirely remove the temptation itself. The state punishes, but the church undertakes to reform and renew life. It helps to repress the natural evil in man, and to this end it exerts authority from man to man over the public conscience. It speaks to the school, the municipality, the legislature, the congress, and when it is fairly representative in its voice it expresses the moral consciousness of the people, the bonds of righteousness and duty toward God and man. Taken as a whole, the

church in this attitude represents a certain authority. Its voice is like that of the watchman telling of the night in the prophecy of Isaiah. This watchfulness, in its collective capacity, extends over society like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. It represses evil ; it stimulates righteousness ; it enforces principles ; it carries its enthusiasm into the community ; it inspires men with the purpose of leadership, and makes their voices heard in clarion notes throughout the world. Wherever the church in its collective capacity is strong, wherever it speaks with undiminished emphasis for principles, wherever it is heard and felt in civil society in a way that commands obedience, it not only asserts its power upon the whole community and gives tone to its life, but there is a retroactive influence which is felt within itself, and the high pitch of its moral reach becomes a new incentive to its own vitality. The church, at any given day or in any given generation, exhibits

departures from this position of authority. It is in the world and yet not of the world; its principle is that of St. Paul, that the right thing is to use this world as not abusing it. The highest function of the church is to create the purpose in religious society of using the things of this world according to the best plans, and it is in proportion as this aim is reached that the church as a moral organization has leverage in the community. Here is its great conservative influence. It holds back from wrong; it maintains moral principles; it is the living teacher of righteousness; it is always conservative; its organization is to hold fast the right things; it conserves existing good; it represents the power behind the social order which expresses the law of God. But this is not the only function that the church discharges in the community. It is in its organization a definite ministry to civil society. As an army has its forerunners to indicate the direction of its

movement and to pioneer the way, so the church, in its spiritual leaders who see truth singly and in advance of others, has a pioneer company who lead its energies into new fields of conquest from age to age. These pioneers are found here and there, — Samuel among the prophets, Elisha the Tishbite outside, Amos among the herdsmen of Tekoa, men who have divine intuitions, men who hold counsel with God for the people, and whose spiritual insight and discernment are beacon lights to the people of God who tread wearily in the dusty pathways of the world. Such men are found in the collective church to-day, and it is in their individual and yet representative utterances that the nation receives rebuke or encouragement. Bishop White and Bishop Alonzo Potter in the Anglican, and Archbishop Hughes and Dr. Brownson in the Roman communion, have emphasized the work of the Christian Church in the nation and helped to deepen the kindly relations between the

two. Dr. Lyman Beecher and Dr. Channing in an earlier day, and Dr. Bushnell and Theodore Parker for a later generation, have occupied a similar position, and the present bishop of New York showed himself at the recent centennial celebration of the inauguration of our government the worthy son of Alonzo Potter in rebuking the ascendancy of political corruption in public life. But the church in the United States is simply a coördinate power with the state, having the same field of civil society to work in, but pursuing its own course and living for the realization of its own ends. Its jurisdiction is moral and persuasive, not authoritative or judicial. It controls the nation only as it controls the individuals that constitute the nation. In education, in reform, in the treatment of crime, in the direction of society, in guiding the national conscience, the church is a moral and spiritual factor with no authority beyond its national majesty and its appeal

to the individual. The result is that its work lies almost exclusively within its own sphere ; and when it realizes its ends in a large way, it renders its best support to the nation.

It is difficult to say in a few words what the essential character of the American religion is. It was defined by that knight of the free lance, the late John Weiss, thus : " America is an opportunity to make a religion out of the sacredness of the individual." ¹ Of American opportunity he says : " Its religion and its polity came down together, quite unsuspected by any temporary forms or stages either, and may be found lying together on the site they have reached, whenever we penetrate beneath sectarian and democratic drift." ² His cardinal point is that " the sacredness of the individual is the basis of American religion." There is to him " nothing outside of the individual." This is what the separatist says. The churchman is at the

¹ *American Religion*, by John Weiss, p. 47. ² *Ibid.* p. 56.

other pole, while, between the churchman on the one hand and the separatist on the other, there are a thousand opinions which cover with constant variations the intervening space. In this kaleidoscope of changing influences it is difficult to formulate the distinctive principles which are giving shape to American religious thought and life. Each one sees from his own outlook and thinks that his point of observation is at the centre. The outlook is so large, and when at last comprehended includes so many interests, that one shrinks from a dogmatic definition; and where religious beliefs are in process of change, where the historical standards of the church have been comparatively unknown, where the dogmatic belief of positive Christianity goes no further back than the Reformation, where a present working organization is counted for what it is rather than for its lineage of authority, where the demand is that simplicity of belief and organization shall be the distinguishing

features of church life and creed, it is as if the antecedents of Christianity had been swept away, and all the magnificent contributions of its ages of contact with humanity had been ignored. In European countries the Roman or the Anglican or the Greek churches have been maintained for centuries in different nationalities, and have guided society essentially upon a basis of fixed ecclesiastical institutions, so that the work of Christian organization and of moral direction in this case have proceeded largely through traditional channels. In this country our traditions at the best do not go back further than two hundred and fifty years ; to a large extent the fixedness of our leading religious bodies can be traced no further than a hundred years ; and the free development of religious life in American organizations is, so to speak, the work of yesterday. Even so late as a quarter of a century ago, the assertion of the integrity of the apostolic succession, and the claim that it secured

the wholeness and continuity of the Christian Church as a divine institution, awakened the hostility of those who do not stand by the historical order. It is only within a very short space of time that this permanent factor in ecclesiastical life has come to be understood on its merits as a fundamental fact in church organization. It was felt that the ecclesiastical order of experiment, crystallized into Protestant forms in America, had in it the elements of finality. To-day this confidence in the authority of Protestant religious organizations is slowly disappearing; and there is going with it a constant elimination of the special theological dogmas of which it was the affirmation. All the churches in America are to-day voluntary and are moving out where they begin to treat men and creeds and even the Bible in freedom. It is not simply that the church-leaders refuse to pronounce anathemas upon all who do not belong to their religious society; even the dogmatic affirmation is not to-day

asserted as if it were the final word in religion. There has passed over the church a widening of view like that which has passed over the interpretation of the constitution of the nation. Our political institutions have received a fresh interpretation in the hundred years of their existence, and yet we are under the same government. All ecclesiastical bodies and institutions have likewise received a fresh interpretation, and yet each religious organization still maintains its own order and works essentially upon its own lines. Not only this, but the solidarity of American religion finds expression to-day in the body of the churchpeople rather than in the ministry which directs and instructs them. The laity have always in Protestant churches been the controlling force; in Episcopal churches they have divided that honor with the clergy; in Roman Catholic churches the laity have only just begun to assert their claim to the management of the temporalities of the church. Once the

clergy held the authority, but to-day and for the future, at least wherever democratic institutions prevail, the laity will maintain a position of coördinate authority with the clergy in the direction of ecclesiastical affairs. The individual in American religion has been too conscious of his position, and the collective interests of civil society have been too little regarded. The whole church has been too individual and personal in its methods of work. It has shown too little comprehensiveness in its attitude toward the interests of society. It has sought to make the disciple rather than to fit the disciple for the Kingdom of God. It has worked too little by institutions and too much by the single man. Its insularity rather than the inclusive and organizing instinct has been its characteristic note, so that to-day, to a very large extent, the interests which are distinctly Christian in civil society, and in which Christianity finds its sphere and freedom for active work in behalf of humanity,

are so largely without the church limits that a Christian man or woman must seemingly go outside the church in order to come up to the full discharge of Christian duty according to the opportunity offered in common life. It is here that American religion has been checked in its development. Its field has been too restricted, and the present confession of Christian leaders is that the sphere in which the collective church works must be broadened until it includes influences which reach the whole of civil society.

It will be seen from this point of view that the church needs to be saved to-day from a too exclusive and too restricted service in a free country. It abides in the use of methods whose utility has been exhausted, and whose effect is to stultify the intelligence of Christian people. There is a tendency to simple individualism in church methods, as there is a tendency to a similar individualism in political methods; and, in a country democratic alike

in church and in state, there is a rule of mediocrity which dampens the enthusiasm and obscures the hopes and ideals, whether of the church or of the state, which lift men into the higher walks and aims of life. The commonness and vulgarity, the absence of lead and the constant return to the point of start, in our American religion, are its great drawbacks. The attempt is made in politics with some degree of success to rally around great working principles. The same effort must be made in the collective church if religion as authorized in the gospel of Jesus Christ is to be fresh and vital in the minds and hearts of men. There is a power in a multitude which is not in the individual ; there is a power in the denomination which, behind the leader, makes him its spokesman and gives him authority ; there is a power in the collective church when it works in directions which gather up the interests of the community and deals with them from a central point of view ; there is a power in our

Christianity in this country when it is regarded as the development of a few central principles, and people, burning with the desire to realize the life of the Son of God in the minds and hearts of men, undertake to direct the life of the whole community upon this simple yet comprehensive basis. The defect of American Christianity lies in its individualism, in its hand-to-hand methods, in the narrowness of its religious beliefs, and in its slight grasp of the central truth of the Incarnation. It has not been broad enough to meet the demands of civil society ; it has not had an organizing influence through institutions upon the whole of life ; it has not connected largeness of individual method with the springs of power which lie in a concrete, comprehensive purpose ; it has failed to emphasize the authority, the vitality, the inspiration which historical Christianity, from the very nature of the case, communicates as a corrective, as a guide, and as an impulse, to the movements of civil society. In

many respects the American Church has been an inspiration to the American people, but it has always been directed and advanced upon a plane that is below its catholic inheritance and short of a proper realization of its power. In its own field of activity it has been inferior to the organization of the political life of the nation. Its one chief defect has been that it has refused to see in the whole of modern society its proper sphere of action, and has not worked in this field with the institutional authority which produces the largest and most permanent results.





CHAPTER XI.

Constructive Unity in Religious Forces.

THE evils that grow out of divided religious work are everywhere felt. The rivalry of churches, their competition for membership, and the worldly side of religious life are the witnesses of a wrong method, and where these features are most pronounced the spiritual interest is largely lost sight of. The question which presses with solemn earnestness upon every candid Christian mind is whether unity of action can be reached in the Protestant bodies. The Protestant idea is the separateness of the individual; the Catholic idea is unity on the basis of the Incarnation; and between these two intervene the affirmations of an historical experiment which has been continued through three centuries. Originally a protest against

the Church of Rome, the Protestant movement in modern society has been both political and religious, and has been mainly identified with individual liberty and the growth of civil society. Protestantism is not, at least on its civil and political side, the negative movement which the Roman Catholic insists that it is. It is a large and positive factor in the affirmations of spiritual truth which have been wrought out by the Protestant Church in contact with society. The world could never willingly go back to the old order when the Roman Church had control of western Europe, and no reconstruction of churches is possible which does not recognize the gains which have come as much through the spiritual affirmations of the church as through the civil affirmations of the people in modern life. It is an oversight to think, from the Roman Catholic side, that the dial of human progress can be turned backward through this whole period, and the Papal Syllabus of 1864, which de-

nounced the principles on which social life is now organized, indicated very distinctly that in any possible reconstruction of the Christian order, the Roman Church could have no immediate part. By its consent to that document it took itself out of the field, and yet, in the larger view of Christian unity upon an organic basis, the Church of Rome must be included as a factor. The weakness of the Protestant churches is that their working methods do not carry out properly the spiritual ideas which they communicate as factors in religion and society. The imperfect organization of these religious bodies imparts to them but little power to give weight to their principles. Each of the different societies, affirming something which, at the time of its organization, had dropped out of the current life in the religious community from which it sprang, has left out something in its attempts at organic development which has impaired or limited its distinct affirmations, and should have

been its complement in the effort to reach the whole of human life. No one likes to say that the different religious organizations which are familiar to us are not Christian in their character and in their influence ; we have no right to think that they are not ; but there is something lacking in them to the extent that no one of them could be taken separately as furnishing the proper basis of a catholic or universal Church. The Universalists have as their principal tenet the salvation of all mankind in Christ, but this affirmation is not supported by the complementary theological truth which makes a good working church. The Baptists claim recognition for devotion and sincerity, but the stress which they put upon the mode of baptism is greater than that which they put upon other essentials in the Christian life, and the result is a one-sided spiritual development in which important factors of Christianity are omitted. The Unitarians came out of the Congregationalists in protest

against a too arbitrary conception of Christ as the Son of God, but in affirming our Lord's humanity they have left out that complementary truth which makes him the Saviour of mankind. The Presbyterians have crystallized their faith around certain religious dogmas which are both affirmed and denied in the Holy Scriptures, and which stand in the way of that simple faith in Christ by which the world is to be transformed into the Kingdom of God. The Congregationalists, who represent the democracy of the Christian world, have stood for the independence of the local church, which is a truth of the first importance, but they have presented Christianity, to use the words of the late Dr. Leonard Bacon, "as a string of onions without the string." The Methodists have organized a system of religious activity which has great and deserved merits, but they have put the whole stress of the working church upon a system of emotional religion which does not of itself build up the mental and

spiritual life into a reasonable Christian faith. The Swedenborgians, emphasizing the church in a new form, have insisted upon universal morality with a stress greater than that to be found elsewhere, but they have left out of their work the vital principle of divine grace. Each of these religious bodies emphasizes a truth so important that their witness cannot be dispensed with, but each one endeavors to build, so to speak, upon a single point, the superstructure of a complete working church. It is plain that each principle or truth here enunciated has its place in a larger system, but in the absence of its complementary truths, which are supplied where the catholic faith is taught, there is the danger of excess, misleading, misunderstanding, to the confusion of Christian ideas; and the result must be more or less manifested in the misdirection of the Christian life. The Anglican Church in its American growths is based upon the fundamental principle of historical continuity and the recognition

of the institutional character of Christianity, but, as it has been mainly developed in this country, it has quite too little taken the Catholic position to which it is entitled. It is only here and there that its development has answered to its inherent character. It supplies the basis by which Protestantism may escape from its insularity and rise to the comprehensiveness and freedom which are demanded of the Christian religion in a great democratic country like our own ; but it can never expand to a dominating position or meet the demands of a work like this, without the coöperation of every religious body in America which maintains any vital principle of Christianity, and by virtue of that principle is entitled to fellowship in the Kingdom of God.

The point is here reached toward which we are struggling with almost insuperable difficulty. All our religious bodies are entrenched in organizations which have their roots in society and are hedged in by pre-

judices and factions which give them, to a great extent, the *vis inertiae*. They represent the water of the inland lake as contrasted with the water of the ocean. The still level of the one is quite out of the reach of the constant struggle and freedom of the other. If the forces of modern Christianity are to be brought to bear upon society to-day, and are to be employed to their full extent in its regeneration, something more must be done than is accomplished by the present operation of different denominations, however vigorously some of them may be administered. Two things are needed — organic breadth and greater freedom of action. The church must be as broad and inclusive as the whole of the society which it is intended to influence, and its methods must be allowed the freedom in local action which is demanded by the character and circumstances of the people who are to be influenced. None of the purely Protestant denominations furnishes the basis on which the whole community

can be reached. Each addresses a class, but does not influence the whole of society. The Church of Rome to-day in the United States, though able to reach all classes, chiefly addresses its own followers. The Anglican Church has emerged from comparative seclusion into competition with the great denominations whose career was well begun when its own future seemed uncertain; but if this communion has waited, like the tortoise, to catch up with Achilles, it has waited to some purpose, and its position to-day as the historical channel of Christianity to the English-speaking people is of grave importance. In numbers or enthusiasm, or in actual agencies of work, it is easily surpassed by other organizations, and it has never yet reached in any large way the virile population that constitutes the bulk of the American people; but in its place as a channel of historical and institutional Christianity to the English-speaking people it occupies a unique position. Le

Maistre has said that the Anglican Church has a divine office to perform in modern religious life. It might do for Protestant people what the Church of Rome has declined to do. It might furnish for the dismembered fragments of Protestant Christianity a rallying point by which their tendency to individualism could be arrested, and by which historical Christianity, with all its conservative strength of influence, could be applied to the broadening and strengthening of the religious life of modern times. This was said with reference to the place of the Church of England in modern Europe. It may be said with essentially the same truthfulness in regard to the reaching of constructive unity among the religious forces of the United States.

In this country the Anglican Church is an institution as broad as the state, and it regards society with as inclusive a purpose as the state regards it. It maintains the continuous order of the ministry,

the great Christian traditions, the Christian sacraments, and the idea of the church as the extension of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ throughout the world. Local as it may seem in its work, stripped of whatever may seem adventitious in a state church, it has the same institutional principle and the same constructive way of looking at the community as a whole which has been the characteristic of the Church of England since its first dealing with the English people. It stands on the principle of transmitting and protecting and applying the essential principles of Christianity to human society under the operation of the laws of common life. Its principles are unchanging, but the interpretation of its dogmas may change from age to age, and its methods are conformable to the demands of the field where its work lies. What the Anglican Church stands for in its larger operation is that it so organizes Christian people in civil society that they work freely under its

inspiration and guidance till it becomes a proper leavening power in Christian civilization. Wherever this communion has worked freely and constructively under its normal principles of action, it has accomplished two things. It has inspired the community as a whole with a higher purpose, and it has maintained among men the principle of personal responsibility to God. The principal thing to be thought of is that the episcopal organization, when applied to the ordering and development of Christian life, is here what it was in the early church. It is a regulative principle. It approaches society as a whole. It sees the community in the light of the Incarnation, and it organizes Christian society in such a way that the light of the Incarnation is diffused through the community at large, at the same time that it is directed to the individual mind and heart. In other words, the episcopal organization, regarded simply from the institutional point of view, provides for the freedom

and variety of method by which the whole of society may be reached and directed as if the sole aim and purpose of its members were to become inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

This view has been very ably set forth by Dr. James Martineau in England. It is that the Church of England can, without changing its standards, so extend its practical operation by the principle of inclusion that all existing Christian life and movement shall find its rightful place within the national church. There are many practical difficulties, even in England, in the acceptance of such a comprehensive principle; but if Christian statesmanship is ever to be put in the place of ecclesiastical management, and the practice of righteousness is to be regarded as important as rightness of belief, it is the way out of present difficulties which seems most reasonable and along which the difficulties may disappear as the good of society becomes more and more the aim and the

end of the working Christian Church. The opposition to the institutional idea of religion, which is the large way of stating the principle of episcopal organization, is too often the fruit of a small jealousy, as if the episcopal clergy, by virtue of their regular orders, cast contempt upon the authority of those who minister in other religious societies. It is cruel to draw this inference; it is not fair to the facts of the case; the work before Christian men in America to-day, under whatever name or order they may be associated, is too serious for this small jealousy. No one who has given this subject proper attention has the least desire to undervalue the integrity of the work which any Christian minister is doing, whatever may be his authority. It is not in this way that constructive unity is to be reached. The point before one is that a working principle must be adopted which is sufficiently comprehensive to organize the church so that it shall reach the whole

of society, while the freedom of the local church shall be fully protected and maintained. This principle was adopted by the apostles, not more for the sake of maintaining the historical succession by the laying on of hands than for the dealing with society in such a way that the church could do its work most efficiently. The recognition of this principle is far more important to-day than it was in the early church, because the multiplicity of life to-day is greater, and the application of Christian truth to social conditions is infinitely more diverse.

Working freely under a large central organization seems to be the only way in which the whole of society may be brought under the control of the Church of Christ. What is wanted is not the denial of the rights of existing churches, but such an organization, like that of the associated charities in London or Boston, that the existing institutions of religion shall properly assist one another in cover-

ing the field where they exist, and in doing their work for the glory of God and the benefit of our kind. When the American House of Bishops issued their famous declaration of 1886, in which they acknowledged four principles to be essential to constructive unity, and in which they affirm the integrity of the episcopal organization to be something which must be at the bottom of any effective unity among Protestant Christians, they acted, not with the thought of increasing the influence of the Episcopal Church, but under the conviction that the proper organization of Christian society could alone be reached by the adoption of this principle. How it could be adapted to existing circumstances it was not for them at that time to suggest; but it was the part of a wise Christian statesmanship to advance this affirmation, and to rise to the conception of the whole of American Christianity under the control of a principle which, broad in its practical opera-

tion, would recognize the position of each congregation as distinctly and protect its rights as faithfully as they are guarded under its present ecclesiastical direction, reducing the competition that hindered or affected its action, and directing the working of the parish to broader and better aims, while giving to the pastors such essential authority, not of a denomination, but of the undivided Church of Christ, that in every city and town and village and hamlet throughout the country the work of Christ would go forward "in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." The severest condemnation of the church to-day is found in its actual operation, in the city, town, and even the country village. It represents the waste, the confusion, and often the destruction of Christian effort amid the rivalries of passing factions which claim to represent the Church of Christ, causing people of the world to stand aside and exclaim, not as the heathen did in the

apostolic days, "How these Christians love one another;" but "How effectually these Christian organizations defeat the work of the Christ whom they claim to serve."

The adoption of the regulative principle which is here suggested as the proper basis of constructive unity involves so much of detail and implies so great a willingness on the part of all Christian organizations to put aside their denials, and not only stand by their affirmations but accept the affirmations of others, that it seems as if the millennium might come before the result here suggested is reached; but if the organized life of the denomination is disregarded and the feelings and convictions of Christian people at large are consulted, it will be found that Christian society is ripe almost beyond belief for such a consummation as is here outlined. Doctrinal distinctions to-day are losing their weight in the desire to bring men to Christ by practical methods. The piety of the hour is the substitution

of charity for self-will. Every pastor in our cities and towns and villages finds that his work counts for more in the community, that the work of the salvation of men is more easily accomplished, and that the improvement of society is more easily secured, in proportion to his readiness to work with other pastors for the attainment of a common purpose. The differences between the religious societies are inappreciable when compared with the untold opportunities for the amelioration of human life and the building up of religious character which are open to those who are willing to improve them. There is an earnestness and a yearning and an appeal alike of the heart and of the head, greater than has before been witnessed, for a new construction of Christian society. The barriers of denominational life seem like an obstacle in the way of the larger unity of practical Christian effort which is desirable; and yet no result that will stand for the next generation and can be re-

garded as fundamental and permanent, can be reached in which the good common sense of the secular world does not sustain the spiritual hopes and aspirations of the people of God.

The work here outlined is not to be done in a day, but it is the distinct religious want of our time. The organization of all our churches upon a basis of unity in essentials which will make their common work practicable is the constant prayer of all Christians ; and it is more and more possible as each day reveals the spiritual drawing together of those who think and feel alike in these things. Only the ecclesiastical officials and the sectarian organizations which support them stand in the way of this coming together. The Episcopal Church, though it may contribute a vital element to the reconstruction of modern Christianity, has itself to learn a lesson from its associated organizations in this country. The churches are like the individuals addressed by St. Paul in

his Epistle to the Romans. They are members one of another, and to use St. Paul's words, ought to say : " Having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith ; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry ; or he that teacheth, to his teaching ; or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting : he that giveth, let him do it with liberality ; he that ruleth, with diligence ; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil ; cleave to that which is good. In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned to one another ; in honor preferring one another ; in diligence not slothful ; fervent in spirit ; serving the Lord ; rejoicing in hope ; patient in tribulation ; continuing steadfastly in prayer ; communicating to the necessities of the saints ; given to hospitality." This is a solution in which the whole of civil society may be brought under the constructive

direction of the Church of Christ, and in which its entire strength may be applied to the incarnation of spiritual life in the souls of men, for an avoidance of the present waste and confusion of Christian effort. Federation, with concessions all around to the principle of institutional order here enunciated, joined to the rising to Christian statesmanship, the seeing eye to eye, and the willingness to overcome self-will alike in the individual and in the ecclesiastical body, is the immediate step towards constructive unity.

Dr. Briggs, who is a distinguished Broad Churchman among Presbyterians, has written an important book,¹ in which he aims to show what the drift of Protestantism has been during the last two centuries, especially how far the American Presbyterian Church has departed from the

¹ *Whither? A Theological Question for the Times.*
By Charles Augustus Briggs, D. D.

Puritan theology of the Westminster confession, and how far a similar departure has been reached in the other Protestant bodies of the United States. Probably no other theologian, unless it were Dr. Fisher of New Haven, could be named who has made so thorough a study of this subject as Dr. Briggs has, and his work deserves attention, because it treats with authority a subject on which it is important to have something more than vague impressions to guide one. Persons who follow religious opinion in New England are quite conscious of the whither of its religious movements, but are not able to speak for the Presbyterian and the Reformed churches in other parts of the country. What is to be noted in them all is that they have unconsciously drifted from their old standards, and are moving forward toward a less dogmatic and more comprehensive statement of religious beliefs.

The details of this movement are well

stated by Dr. Briggs from the strictly theological point of view. In the first two and the last two chapters of his work he breaks away from his Presbyterian limitations, and looks upon the entire Christian Church in this country in its wholeness and in its unity, and his book is symptomatic of the feeling and thought which pervade every Christian community. Without proposing a method, Dr. Briggs takes such a survey of the existing religious bodies, that, from his point of view, it would not be difficult to show the feasibility of a movement for unity which would in a short time reduce the ecclesiastical conflicts in the American churches to a minimum and bring about substantial unity in their methods of operation. He shows that the drift of all these communions is away from those features which constitute their difference from one another and toward the opinions which they hold in common. In matters of doctrine nearly all of them are broadening their faith.

The Puritan view of the atonement is passing away ; the Calvinistic decrees are no longer set forth ; the verbal inspiration of the Bible is mainly a belief of the past, and the substantial facts won by the higher criticism will soon be commonly received ; the old doctrine about the last things is fleeing away like the darkness before sunrise, and is being replaced everywhere by a broader and better statement of religious opinion concerning the future life. This is the gain in the theological world, and this is the summary of what Dr. Briggs sets forth in his timely and significant volume.

There is another side to this matter, to which Dr. Briggs gives less attention. In his chapter on "Barriers" he lays down some of the difficulties which now stand in the way of Christian union. The first is the insistence on submission to a central ecclesiastical authority claiming the divine right of government. The second has been the subscription to elaborate creeds. The third is the insistence upon uniformity

of worship. The fourth is the barrier of traditionalism, the set-back of organizations. All these barriers have been raised by existing sections of the Christian world, and at the present time they are all more or less broken down. If Christian union were actually set about, it is believed that the Roman Church, as well as the English, would contrive some way by which the Protestant ministry could be legitimated without accepting all that is implied in the supremacy of the Pope or in the apostolical succession. The Protestant churches are already willing to recede from their elaborate creeds. The Church of England would not do to-day what it did in 1662, because the Puritan party then demanded greater freedom in worship. The difficulties that grow out of the formal ecclesiasticism of Christian bodies are not insuperable, and would easily disappear if any one of them should have the courage of its convictions and make a clean breast of its weakness in isolation from the whole

church. The American bishops at Chicago in 1886 almost touched this point of religious heroism in their famous declaration, as Dr. Briggs is at pains to show. The whole issue to-day is like a game of chess. All parties are ready, or nearly ready, for a central move, and are restrained from action because each one is afraid to confess its own sins in the face of the Christian world.

This is the upshot of the treatment of religious movement in which Dr. Briggs expresses his sense of what is now possible in our Christian societies.¹ He does

¹ The following passages from his volume show that he is fully aware of the demands of constructive unity: "If there is anything in a national religion and the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ, it is high time that American Protestantism should rise to the situation, grasp the problem, and endeavor to solve it. The ideals of Christian unity and a national religion are rising into greater prominence in American Christianity," (page 168.) In his preface he says: "The barriers between the Protestant denominations should be removed and an organic union formed. An alliance should be made between Protestantism and Romanism and all other branches of

not so much formulate the plan as state the terms on all sides which would enter into the shaping of such a plan. This is modesty, indeed ; but there is one feature which he conspicuously overlooks, though he comes very near to stating it. It is practically that the liberty of action which he seeks in a comprehensive unity of the different American churches cannot be reached without a system of federation or organic unity, or comprehensive direction, which comes from a central administration. It is here that the halt is most decided. The question is whether the liberty and freedom which are essentials in the American Protestant churches can be met by such an enlargement in methods of practical government on the part of the Roman or Anglican churches as would secure to

Christendom. The Lambeth Conference, in its proposals for Christian unity, points in the right direction. The Church of England is entitled to lead. Let all others follow her lead and advance steadily toward Christian Unity," (page xi.)

the Protestant bodies their proper development as institutions without impairing the independence and freedom to which they are accustomed. The case is as broad as it is long, and the question of Christian unity lies here as in a nutshell. A more practical conception of what Christianity is in modern life, and what it has wrought, is needed by both the Roman and the Anglican communions before they can take the organic weakness out of the Protestant churches; and the conviction, that the freedom of the individual, valuable as it is in the Protestant churches, reaches its best results under wise direction, must be far more universal than it is now, if any such spiritual leadership is consented to in a large way. The problem in the church is like the problem between capital and labor in the field of industry, or the problem in modern civilization, which is to bring into working harmony the upper and the under forces which are the natural complement of one another.



CHAPTER XII.

Unity through Working Agreements.

THERE are two ways of studying Christian unity at the present time. One is the analytical, in which the existing condition of ecclesiastical society is considered, with the effort to make such an analysis of the creeds of churches and such an estimate of their agreements that the work of practical unity may at once begin. The other is the synthetic process, in which the present ecclesiastical societies are not disturbed, but are treated as the factors of a more comprehensive view of the relation of the Christian to the secular world. The analytical treatment brings one at once against the snags of deep-rooted controversies, and the hope of a solution of the problem of a restored unity is lost amid the traditional differences

which now form bars of separation. If you trace these differences to their origin, you discover that they grew out of the variations of allowable opinions which in many instances have been precipitated into dogmas that hold the hearts of Christian people within hard and fast lines. They now have the character of an original part of Christianity, and, like the barnacles that have grown on the sides of a ship, are not easily removed. There is little hope of relief from the schisms of Christendom in this direction. The only unity to which men can turn is the unity of spiritual agreements. If Christianity is ever to be the leaven of our civilization, in the sense in which it was the leaven of society in the brightest days of the Holy Roman Empire, it must be a larger factor in the direction of life than it is now. The Holy Roman Catholic Church in the Holy Roman Empire has slowly faded away till it is only the remembrance of a splendid ideal of the relations of

church and state which was never fully realized. It is impossible to realize it to-day. The men who build castles in the air may work a long time to harmonize the Roman, the Greek, the Anglican, and the Protestant churches so that they shall be of one mind, but they have grown too far apart and have their roots too far back in the history of the race easily to retrace their steps and work together as one fold under one shepherd. The ecclesiastical structure which is to be built out of their mutual concessions in outward forms is not likely soon to be raised. Another point of view must be taken if society is to derive large benefit from Christianity, and its great compulsions are to be better realized among men.

The unity that is within reach in this world is an ethical and a spiritual unity, not a unity that addresses the outward eye and dwells in a temple made by hands. It is as difficult for Christian people to conceive of unity after this kind as it was

for the Jews to believe that the Prince of the House of David was the lowly Nazarene, the Son of Mary. The main reason why this outward unity is not soon to be realized is that the recognition of the personal element in modern life renders it seemingly impossible. The conception of Christianity which obtained in the early Christian ages, and which is the dominant idea in the Roman Church, has already attended its own funeral. It is the regal idea, the belief that the individual withers and that the world is governed by institutions in which the will of man disappears as a personal force. The regal idea has its place in the church; the realization of Christianity in modern society apart from institutions which organize life into collective power is like trying to make a rope of sand; and yet nothing is accomplished to-day which does not take into account the part which the individual plays as a member of the community. The men who belonged to Cæsar's household in the

early church and the men who believe in Christianity to-day with certain reserves of agnosticism see life from almost opposite points of view, and no advance towards Christian unity can be made which does not take this difference of position into account. The church is still an institution and acts upon society most beneficently in its institutional character, but it is composed of persons who have been trained in the atmosphere of modern life and who are able to do their own thinking. The element of authority and the element of free thought and individual responsibility dwell in the same mind and heart. They have to be harmonized in the individual.

This is the task which presents itself to the modern state as truly as to the modern church. The nation to-day imparts its strength to the people and gives them political unity, but it returns only what it receives from them, though it is returned not in individual influence but in collec-

tive power. The church to-day is in one sense nothing more than a collection of people who stand up to be counted as the kingdom of God in the world, but what it is as an organized body, with its traditions and its inheritance of Christian organizations, is something vastly different from what it is to the individual believer. The individual has his place in both political and religious society, but the individual alone is not the nation or the church. And yet in all our plans of life the individual factor is taken into account, and nothing is accomplished until the individual will, in its collective form, is behind it. Authority and reason are the two poles between which the electrical forces of the will are in constant play. Authority in the church is a great factor, but it no longer has dominion over the individual; and, on the other hand, reason alone is inadequate to maintain the conservative and constructive forces of religion. The two go hand in hand in our best modern life. In all that

belongs to the future of the Christian church there are and will be these two factors, authority and right reason. They cannot be separated, and in any changes that are yet to take place they are the factors that cannot be overlooked. The difficulty of realizing Christian unity is that in outward forms one party insists upon the surrender of the reason to authority, while the other insists upon the absolute authority of reason. The situation is such that formal unity is reached only after such a change has passed over the active religious life of the world as we have no right to expect. The earlier Christian ages witnessed the domination of the church as an institution ; the next step in religious evolution was the individual coming to self-consciousness ; the third step is to be the union of the two in a larger social development. It is institutional action, modified by the freedom of the individual, which is to mark the future development of the Christian Church.

It is plain that little or nothing is to be expected on the ecclesiastical side. The power of the church in modern society is ethical and spiritual. It is not in a Papal Bull ; it is not in a formal creed ; it is not necessarily in apostolical succession ; it is not in following the letter of Scripture. The strict ecclesiastical relations of the churches to one another will be for many generations chiefly what we see them to-day. What the churches are in the way of help to society comes mainly from the magnitude and strength of their agreements. In times past they have mostly emphasized their differences, their antagonisms. If they should yield to the present desire to magnify their agreements, how many articles of the Apostles' Creed would be denied ? If they should come together on the basis of the moral law, how many would be without the fold ? If it should be allowed that the " eternal hope " may be the light of those who had no chance in this world, what ethical comfort would be given

to those who have been better acquainted with the limitations than with the possibilities of the present life! If the eternities, felt alike in law and conscience, come like the shadows of night over every soul with solemn import, what sympathy flows like an electric current through the lives of men most disparate in their moral and spiritual character! When you look at life on its ethical and spiritual side there is a wonderful tenderness of feeling in all men toward the humanity of which each one forms a part. If we are the moral wreck of God's creation, yet what capacities of a God-like order still remain! No man is without interest to his fellows on the moral and spiritual side. When the Christian churches are looked at in their collective strength as our established agencies for bringing men into the closer service of God, how small and insignificant do their differences appear! The organization may be closer to the primitive standard in one case than in another, but the body is more than the

raiment, and where the fruits of spirit are manifest in Christian character, we are not to measure the institutional order of the church by too strict a rule. When one transfers himself in imagination from this planet to a central position where he can see the revolutions of all the planetary systems and can obtain a relative view of the vast whole, the things peculiar to our own planet sink into insignificance ; and when men rise above the present factions of the universal church and see its operation as a comprehensive and yet personal force impressing itself on humanity everywhere, its ethical and spiritual power is such that one loses his thought in trying to express it in terms of language. It is in this higher view, which is as legitimate as the purely ecclesiastical view, that there are reconciliations which do not appear in actual society. The moral and spiritual forces are seen in their collective capacity, and the vast operations of the tendency toward righteousness are taken at their

true value. In this light, the world is better than it seems, and there is a substantial unity of purpose amid a thousand disagreements.

It will be said that this is a broader view of the kingdom of heaven on earth than the facts will warrant. It is certainly the ideal view, but it is not without important confirmations. It is an attempt to see life in the light of the highest moral constructions, and it is only in this way of looking at the state of righteousness in this world that one can grasp it as a whole. There is something in the glib way in which ecclesiastical experts size up the different religious families that is utterly abhorrent to a spiritual mind. But when the relations of the various parts of the universal church are considered in their practical contact with society, it will be seen that in the next phase of its development the Christian Church must follow lines of action that will increase its agreements. It has already been intimated that the

future growth of the Kingdom of God lies in the general renewal of society. It is not denying its character as a witness to the Incarnation, nor its power as the revealer of Jesus Christ to men, to insist upon its renewing agency in improving the conditions of modern life. These social changes are the evidence that the spiritual Kingdom of God is becoming coextensive with the life of humanity, and that Christ is taking the place that belongs to him as its head.

There are two ways in which the collective church approaches mankind. One part of its work is to prepare the individual for another world by an act of faith on his part and by a spiritual application of the efficacy of Christ's death to the soul through the sacraments. Through faith or through sacraments, or through both, the individual finds the church the stepping-stone to a renewed life. The appeal to the individual is constant; it is here that the church takes Christ's place

and makes its personal efforts in the winning of souls. But this is not its whole work. The church is one of the three great institutions of society. It has to do with the family and the state. It is a great factor in our daily life, and the more thoroughly democratic our civilization becomes the more the conservative institutions of society are appealed to for an influence which was less needed when there was less freedom in human relations. The Christian communities carry weight as ethical and spiritual forces. They have the family under their jurisdiction ; they have the education of the young under their charge ; they are the guardians of public morals ; they are monitors of the state in its exercise of protection, in its view of public trusts, in the maintenance of reverence and honor and virtue. As one looks at our American life to-day, the different denominations bring to bear upon the congregations which belong to them, and through them upon the common society of the

country, the highest sort of moral and spiritual influence. They give tone and character to city and town and village. There is no religious society which could well be spared. Collectively, this is the mightiest influence that exists in the modern world. It is seen in the midst of its infirmities; there is hardly a Christian body that comes up to its ideal; but there is in the aggregate a powerful sympathy between its members and the great commonwealth of souls upon whom they act in their capacity as fellow-citizens. The peculiarities of the religious body are often more noted than its structural influence, but when it is regarded as a positive institution it is always found to be a centre of ethical power. The things that differentiate religious people from one another are here expressly ignored because they are merely hindrances to the positive benefit which each denomination communicates to society; they do not prevent that sum of influences in daily life by which the

Christian church blesses and sanctifies the world.

There can be no doubt that, while the present opportunities of reaching the individual are greater than they ever were before, the difficulty of finding the lives of people preoccupied with affairs is still greater. The old ways of doing religious work are not the ways through which the people are now best reached. All the churches are largely fossilized by clinging to statements of doctrine and following methods of work which are not in harmony with the ethical and spiritual movement of the people. There is more activity today in the churches, but there are also more unchurched people than ever before. The field widens visibly from day to day. You put out your hand and seem to touch all mankind. The religious societies are constantly reporting openings for missionary service which did not exist half a century ago. The industrial life of the people has so changed that men are more

open to-day for the institutional study of religion than they once were. There is a flowing together of the forces which constitute our civilization. There is the feeling that the right must triumph, that the individual is to divide more with his neighbor, that the state is to be controlled in its moral action by the presence of a higher power, and that the family and the public school and the political life are parts of a great whole out of which each one is to draw a greater satisfaction. This is often crudely expressed, but it is the undercurrent of thought that runs through the nation. There is the consciousness that Christianity in its social action is something broader, larger, more human and more divine than it has yet been understood to be. There is the conviction that the destiny of man on this earth is more intimately connected with it than has been believed. The conviction grows that the Christian Church is entering in the United States, and wherever else society is free,

upon a practical development along social and ethical lines which have not before been followed with the vigor that is now possible. The strength of this conviction is such that the religious body which will not work for the highest and broadest interests of humanity, as they are distributed in our social connections, is held to be untrue to the essentials of a Christian Church. It has come to be the aim of the great divisions of the Christian family, though it is yet very imperfectly realized, to make our life in this world more nearly the pattern of what human life in its best estate ought to be. Ethical and spiritual interests have taken a new position in the conception of what constitutes character and what makes happiness. This is felt in the reconstructions of theology, and even more in the ethical reorganization of society. It is felt in the tumbling down of the ecclesiastical barriers which have divided one company of Christians from another. There is a process going on in

the churches analogous to that which is felt among the nations. It is everywhere understood that the people are the rulers to-day; whatever may be the outward form of the government, this is the unvarying fact; and there is growing up between governments the consciousness of a common life. There is not a day in which the press does not record some fresh evidence of this change. Governments have established international relations; they hold by the things that make for peace. This is the order of the world. Men are coming to stand upon this political platform everywhere. The nations are as one nation; humanity is as one man. The commerce between nations, the exchanges of thought and courtesy, the reciprocity of affection which is the outgrowth of the touch of the hand, have established new conditions which furnish the basis for a higher civilization. What has come without observation in the political and social, has also come as silently

in the religious world. The leaders of the great established churches may stand as far apart as the antipodes from one another, but they cannot prevent the increase of practical sympathy between those who call God their Father and Christ their Saviour. The lines of a broader and better religious life have already been laid down in our common society. The people are a thousand times nearer to one another spiritually than their religious leaders would have us believe. The heart of the Christian Church beats as the heart of one man ; it is more than ever —

“True to the kindred points of heaven and home.”

It is often said, when the church is regarded from this point of view, Why not unite at once and work together? The vested interests and traditions of our Christian communities prevent this, but they do not forbid and cannot prevent the meeting of brethren of all names on the great free demesne of modern society, where the yet remaining conquests for

the human race are to be secured. It seems almost like a lack of faith to tell people to go to work along the lines of their affections, instead of first agreeing to believe together; but the heart has as much to do with the operation of the Christian religion as the head, and where the reason interposes difficulties the heart sweeps them away with a large broom. It is through the channels of coöperation for the industrial, social, and personal improvement of our fellow-citizens that we are to take steps that lead to the enlargement of personal character and bring people together in righteousness. It is here that the words of the Master come true: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Ecclesiastical unity in the Church of God in this world may or may not be reached in the course of time. It seems far off to-day. It may be, as in so many other things where man plans and God

disposes, that the divine realization is to be different from what men fondly expect. But there are certain lines of action about which there can be no dispute. If the great denominations of Christendom work in the social field where there is a sufficient call for all their energies and secure to us better homes, better schools, better laws, better conditions of life, better environment for the individual, greater freedom, more healthful action, and the removal of an increasing number of the negations and obstacles that are in the way of the free growth of body and soul, there will be such growing love toward men inspired by such love toward God, that all Christians will lose sight of their differences in the discovery that their agreements are the sufficient basis on which society in this world can be so organized as to have in itself a foretaste of the satisfactions of the world to come.

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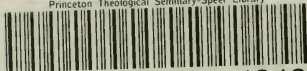


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